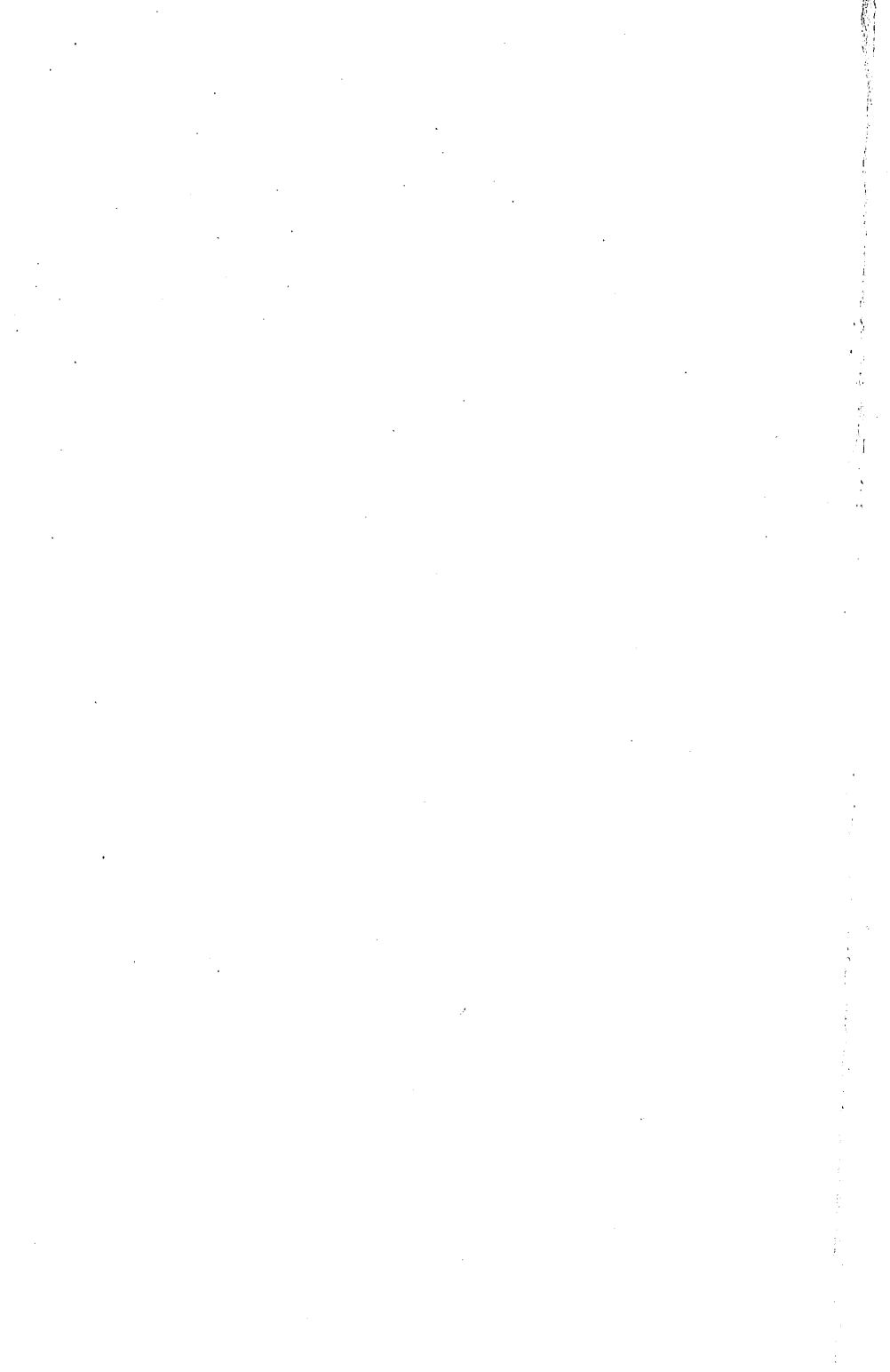


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The
DE-MIRACLEIZED BIBLE

BY

W. REED DISNEY

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Registered at Stationers' Hall, Great Britain, 1926

By

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Printed and Published by

W. REED DISNEY

New York, N. Y., U. S. A.

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By The Author

*This book speaks for itself.
It is an attempt to promulgate
the views of one who sincerely
believes every word of its text.*

*The greatest wish of his life
is to see the false pretentious
fallacies of so-called religion
submerged in its hypocrisy.*

W. R. D.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION



THE Earth is very old. How old, nobody knows, certainly no one on this earth at present, but it is decidedly thousands and thousands of years old.

Some people, scientists and students of various kinds have figured it out each to almost to an approximate figure, but as these figures vary by many thousands of years, we may be excused for saying that they are guessing within half a dozen cyphers or so, and are probably all wrong.

As a matter of fact, it does not matter a button to most of us (perhaps to all of us) whether the world is a thousand, or a thousand million years old.

On the other hand, there are numbers of people, and it is to be regretted to note that there are many clergymen among them, who will tell you that the earth is only about five thousand years old. These people know nothing absolutely of what they speak, in view of positive proofs that it is hundreds of thousands of years old, and we should ignore their teachings and instructions, which would take us back to the Dark Ages, when a narrow bigoted Church ruled, and persons were not allowed to think for themselves, under threats of a terrible hereafter, and a much more unpleasant present.

The Bible, which purports to tell the whole story of the world, the entire creation of all things, was put together from a collection of old papers, notes, stories, legends, etc., written in several ancient languages, and translated into its present form only a few hundred years ago. It only travels over a tiny area of land from beginning to end, and absolutely ignores the greater part of the known inhabited countries of the world of its period. That, alone, would show us, that as a world history, it is unreliable in its present form.

This translation, too, was done at a time when people were priest-ridden or at least church-ridden, and imbued with all the dark superstitions of ignorance and prejudice. The men, who translated it, products of their age, just as prejudiced and ignorant as of that age, in spite of their so-called learning, made up, when their sources of information failed, such parts as suited their purpose and concealed their ignorance; the result was the Bible, supposed to be the word of God, as we know it now, full of the most impossible happenings and miracles, that any child of common intelligence knows could never have occurred. Yet to this day, we are exhorted to believe in these fairy tales, and they are still told to us as facts.

Occasionally one comes across a minister of a church, who is candid enough to confess his disbelief in these miracles, but whose excuse for disseminating them further is, that the lay man, that is, you and I, reader, are not yet fit to receive our religion in any other way. "The uneducated

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classes may be led away from the Church, if their faith in the works of the Bible were shaken."

To the writer it seems a very unworthy foundation for a belief, if it has to be bolstered up on a tissue of transparent lies and Arabian Nights' tales to hold it together. Fortunately those days are passing, and even to the uneducated classes, light and thought are coming.

One day, no doubt in the very, very far future, a history will be written to explain the true story of the earth's creation from its very infancy, though I do not expect it will be in our or your time. In the meantime, suppose we take the Bible, as it is written today, forgetting all dates, which we know are wrong, omitting all miracles, which we know never happened, or try to get at least some sort of rational explanation of them.

Chapter II

CREATION—MAN

It is stated that God created the world in a period of six days, doing considerable work each day in the following order of creation:

- First: Light, as distinct from darkness.
- Second: Land called the earth, divided from the waters, that is, the oceans and seas.
- Third: Grass, Fruits, and all growing vegetation.
- Fourth: Sun, Moon, Stars and all heavenly bodies.
- Fifth: Living things such as Fishes, Fowls, etc.
- Sixth: Animals, including Man.

On the seventh day, God rested. That is why all nations (more or less) rest (more or less) on one day out of every seven, Jews, Christians, Mahomedans, and other races and nationalities.

The name of the first man was Adam. God created him, also his wife, called Eve, and placed them in a lovely spot, situated somewhere in the neighborhood of Southwest Asia, nearabouts where Asiatic Turkey is now. At least, so we believe. This beautiful spot was called the Garden of Eden, and any place thoroughly delightful nowadays, is spoken of as an Eden in consequence.

As already said, God placed Adam and Eve in this Garden of Eden, where most beautiful fruits of every description grew. Here, he told them, they were to live in peace and happiness, with only one restriction, which was to forbear from eating the fruit of two of the trees in the garden, the tree of Life and the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. It would seem to us to be pretty good fruit on these trees, but no doubt God had his reasons for these restrictions.

Adam and Eve lived together very happily for a time. Now Adam had, at God's command, given names to all the living things on earth. Among them was the Serpent, what we would call a snake today. We are required to believe that at this time the Serpent walked on two legs. Probably his shoulders slouched a little.

Now a serpent nowadays is not what you can call a particularly nice creature, and it seems this particular serpent was no better than its kind, and was a malicious, trouble-making snake.

He knew of the prohibition of the fruit of the two trees and it worried him considerably. He was not of sufficient importance to be barred from them by God, it would seem, but he just wanted to know what would happen if either Adam or Eve ate the fruit. So he said to Eve (yes, the Bible tells us the Serpent could talk, and so could all the other animals, birds, etc.), "Why don't you eat some of the fruit of those trees?"

"Because it is forbidden us by God," said Eve.

"Oh," said the Serpent, "That is because you

will become as great as God himself. You try it and see."

Eve allowed herself to be persuaded and took an apple off the tree of Knowledge and ate it, and also persuaded Adam to eat an apple, or some of hers. As soon as they did so however, they did not change to Gods, but became thoroughly frightened at having disobeyed the orders of God.

Later in the day towards evening, God called them and reproached them for what they had done. Eve hung her head in shame, but Adam showed a litte spirit, not much of it though, just a little.

"It was all Eve's doing," he said, "she made me eat the apple; I didn't want it."

"For doing this," said God, "that is, disobeying my commands, because I do not care about the apple itself, you will be punished. I meant to let you live here in peace and happiness for evermore. Now I will drive you away and you will have to work for your living, by the sweat of your brow, from morning till night. For meat and drink, all of which was here in Eden, ready to your hand, and which by your own actions you have lost, you will have to toil and dig and produce by your own efforts as long as you live."

So He drove them away and to prevent them coming back and eating the fruit of the other tree, of Life, he placed an angel with a sword of fire at the gates of Eden to keep them out. As a punishment for the Serpent, God caused him to crawl on the ground on his stomach, for ever after, he and

all other snakes and reptiles, as he was not fit to stand up side by side with man.

Adam became a farmer and tilled the ground for the rest of his life, and no doubt Eve became a very dutiful housekeeper. She learned to make clothing for Adam and herself, from fig leaves it is said, and later probably from the skins of animals. Some of her female descendants to this date do the same things, only they do not of course wear fig leaves.

Now this is the story of creation as the Bible tells it, but it is **known** for a fact that it is not intended for an actual description of what really happened. It is really believed by people whose opinions are of value, that the six or seven days' creation referred to many thousands of years in which the Earth was really formed, by what is called Evolution or gradual development, and by a Bible day, is meant a cycle of years, an age of perhaps centuries, and that Adam represents Man as a class, not as an individual.

Of course we know there could *not* have been an angel with a flaming sword, and no one knows where Eden was actually situated. It probably means, and that is the better way for us to regard it, that if Man (that is, every human being) were to act up to everything that is right and proper, honest and just, truth and probity, life on earth would be a veritable Eden, as used in its best sense.

Adam and Eve had three sons, but we are only interested in two of them, Cain and Abel. Cain was the older of the two. They were brought up

to till the land, the same as their father did, in fact as farmers. They each had their own little plots to grow fruit and vegetables.

It was the custom in those days, days of superstition and communing, for people to bring offerings and fruits to God. This was to ensure good crops and harvests, and was on the same principle that we give offerings to the Church today. Cain and Abel both brought offerings at one time to God. Cain brought a pretty good variety, but Abel selected the very cream of his produce, the best he had and brought it.

God was pleased with Abel, but not so with Cain, who, he probably thought, was indifferent in his offering. God therefore showed his pleasure towards Abel, but was not so gracious with Cain, who, taking umbrage at it, became argumentative and abusive with Abel, which led to a brawl, in which Cain killed Abel. Then he fled.

But God found him out quickly and drove him away, and told him that as he had murdered a man, from then on, every man's hand would be against him. This has been the principle on earth at all times since, with murderers and wrongdoers of all kind. Cain went away to another country, called Nod and married there. He settled there and raised a large family.

When you read the Bible, it would appear that only Adam, Eve and Cain were on the earth, yet here in its very pages, we have the evidence that there must have been other people, else where did Cain get his wife. Several suggestions have been

put forward, but no doubt exists, as stated by us in the previous chapters, that the stories of these people were not actual facts or occurrences, but what are known as parables, to cover a series of circumstances, possibilities and guesswork, particularly the last.

Adam lived to the age of eight hundred and fifty years, we are told. Think of it? 850 years! No doubt they meant months, that is about sixty to seventy years of age. He had a whole lot of descendants, several of whom are reported to have lived to very great ages.

Among them was a man named Nimrod, a great hunter, and in consequence, we call a man who slaughters a number of innocents birds and animals wantonly these days for *Sport*, a Nimrod, too. Another of his descendants was called Methuselah, who lived longer than any other man on earth at any time, up to nine hundred and sixty-nine years of age. Bible years, you know. He must have certainly been very wrinkled.

Methuselah had a grandson named Noah, who is the next character of importance in Bible history, so we will start another chapter with him.

Chapter III

NOAH—BABEL—ABRAM

Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham and Japhet. The Bible says he was five hundred years old when he had them, but no doubt, the bookkeeping was very bad in those days.

At this time, the world had grown very considerably, and men and women were marrying and raising big families and getting rich. With riches, came carelessness and indifference, and in consequence, wickedness. It is always the rich man in the play or story who is wicked, you have probably noticed; so it is natural that it should be so in the Bible stories.

These wicked people forgot God, who became very angry with them in consequence, and decided to destroy them, saving only Noah, his wife, his three sons, who were now married, and their wives, and children.

He told Noah to build a big boat, which was afterwards called the Ark, and to get into it with his family and some of every kind of living beast, seven males and females of the "clean" beasts, that is, those that could be eaten for food, and one of each, male and female, of "unclean" beasts, which Noah did.

Then it began to rain, and it rained for forty days and nights, and everybody and everything

on earth was destroyed and drowned, except those in the Ark. Here the Bible gets mixed up a little, how long it rained, with how long the ground was covered with water, but the long and short of it was that it was frightfully wet for several months, and then the rain stopped and the waters gradually receded, and the land dried.

During the rain, the Ark floated like a boat on the crest of the waters, and finally rested on the top of Mount Ararat, where Noah and his family disembarked. God now spoke to Noah, and assured him that He would never send another flood to destroy the world, and as a sign and pact, He put a rainbow in the sky. We still have rainbows in our skies, when it rains and the sun shines at the same time, which happens now and then.

Of course, this story of Noah and the flood must not be taken too seriously, but it is a warning that punishment follows wickedness. The fact that we have rainbows today, and the Bible says God then sent one, does not prove the actual fact of an Ark or a flood.

Some time after this, Noah discovered his son Ham making fun of him to his brothers, who were much aggrieved by it; Noah reprovved Ham and promised as a punishment, that he and his descendants should be slaves or workers for his brothers.

Ham was what would be regarded as a man of color in these days, as indeed all the rest of these people (Adam, Noah and the others) were,

and to this day, negroes are spoken of as "Sons of Ham" and especially in slave days.

Noah lived to be nine hundred and fifty years of age, years, as so called at that time.

Some time after Noah's death, the people (the Bible does not explain where they all came from, but you are not expected to ask questions about the Bible) began to build a tower, reaching into heaven, as a refuge in case God sent another flood. Really, this seems quite a natural thing for them to have done, so as to be out of the reach of the waters, if they came.

As God however had promised never to send another flood, it made Him very angry, and he so confused their language, that they could not understand each other, and had to give up the work. It is known as the Tower of Babel, from the confusion of languages. No doubt there were thousands and thousands of people of different nations, then existent, all speaking different tongues, just as there is in all big communities, who drifted into work on this big contract. Anyway, this is where, the Bible claims, started all the assorted languages and dialects of today.

Noah had many descendants, but no one of any consequence until we come to Abram: Abram was the son of Terah and Abram's wife was named Sarai. He had a nephew named Lot, and for a time they all went to a place called Canaan and lived there: from there to Egypt, where he passed Sarai off as his hister, which nearly got him into trouble with the Pharoah, or King.

Abram and Lot were farmers owning many flocks of animals. Both were very rich, and after they left Egypt, they separated, as their shepherds and workmen used to be jealous of one another and fight together. Lot went to the plains of Jordan, and Abram back to Canaan.

Just at this time, a number of local Kings, really petty chieftains (but any chief who had half a dozen followers in those days called himself a king), began to fight among themselves, and one of them took Lot prisoner. As Abram's employees numbered more than this king's whole army, Abram went after him, fought him and rescued Lot. I do not suppose that this king troubled Abram and Lot any more. In those days, they cleaned up thoroughly after a war.

Abram and Sarai having no children, Abram married Hagah, the Egyptian maid of Sarai, but this got the latter so angry, that she drove Hagah away into the desert. There Hagah began to cry and an angel of God comforted her and told her to go back and tell Abram all about it and everything would be all right. Also that she would have a son, whose name was to be Ishmael, who would grow up to be a wild boy, fighting with everybody, and with everybody fighting against him. No doubt Hagah felt very comforted.

Anyway she went back to Canaan and everything turned out as the angel predicted. I wouldn't be surprised that we have some of Ishmael's relations living around us at the present time.

At this time God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's to Sarah, and God promised him that his descendants would be great and prosperous and would own all the land that Abraham then dwelt in.

Later he had a son by Sarah whom he called Isaac, and the story is told, that to try Abraham's faith and belief, God instructed him to slay Isaac and offer him up as a burnt offering: and that Abraham started to obey and even had Isaac all bound on the altar to kill him, when God intervened and forbade him to go further, blessed him for his faithfulness, and reiterated his promise that he and his descendants should own all the land thereabouts, and that God would take them under his special protection.

Then God told him that he was going to destroy two cities, in one of which Lot lived, because they were so frightfully wicked. The names of these cities were Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham asked God if it were quite just to destroy everybody, the good with the bad, and God consented to spare the whole city, if as few as fifty, forty, thirty, twenty and finally even ten good people could be found there.

The Bible does not say anything more about this, but evidently there were not ten, because the two cities were destroyed.

Two angels were sent first to warn Lot and his family. They were warned to run away as fast as they could, and under threat of dire penalties, not to look back. Lot's wife was curious and

did look back and the Bible says she was changed into a pillar of salt.

It is quite possible that the destruction of these cities was due to volcanic causes and that it was really a matter of discretion than anything else that advised the hastening away without looking back. Perhaps Lot's wife tarried, was caught by the molten lava and perished accordingly.

Abraham married again after this and had a large posterity. He died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five. Sarah died before him.

Chapter IV

ISAAC—JACOB—JOSEPH

Isaac had married his cousin Rebecca. He met her at a well, where she helped him water his father's flocks. They lived very happily together and had two sons, Esau and Jacob.

Esau was a hairy rough sort of fellow, and Isaac loved him more of the two, while Jacob was a clean-cut, smooth, good-looking young chap, and was his mother's favorite. It was the custom in those days for the eldest son to inherit the father's estate, unless specially arranged otherwise, and this grieved Rebecca somewhat, for Jacob's sake. She worried much how to help him.

As years passed and Isaac grew old, he lost the sight of his eyes, and became practically blind, and rather helpless. One day, Jacob, on his mother's suggestion, dressed a dish of game or venison, and carried it into Isaac for his dinner. His mother had first dressed him up in Esau's clothes, and had put skins of animals on his hands and face, so as to make him appear as hairy as Esau, and so disguised, he went into Isaac, told him he was Esau, and begged his blessing.

As from the custom of that day, the blessing carried with it the promise of the greater part of Isaac's possessions at Isaac's death, there was quite some depth in Jacob's deception.

"Come near," said Isaac, "so I can feel you," and when Jacob came to him and he passed his hands over his hands and face, he said, "Strange. The hands and face are those of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob." Still he felt convinced, and blessed Jacob, and conveyed to him his inheritance.

But when Esau came home and also brought a dinner of venison to Isaac, the deception was discovered, and Jacob ran away for fear of the anger of Esau, who was pretty furious at the trickery. Rebecca sent him to her brother Laban at a place called Haran.

There he met Laban's younger daughter Rachel, and fell in love with her, and when he decided to stay and work with Laban, and the latter asked what wages he wanted, he offered to work for seven years for Laban, if he would give him Rachel for his wife at the end of the period, which Laban, like a wily old farmer, agreed to do.

Rachel however, had an older sister, Leah, who had weak eyes, so the Bible says, and when the seven years were up, Laban fooled Jacob and gave him Leah instead of Rachel, and he had to work seven more years to get Rachel. No doubt, Laban was a very tricky, shrewd father, but Jacob seems to have been far from bright, or deeply in love.

In fact, Laban was so sly and deep that Jacob was lucky, I think, to get anything at all out of it, when his fourteen years were up, and the time came for parting, for his return home, but Jacob

must have had a streak of shrewdness strongly ingrained in himself, because he was fairly rich too, and had flocks and flocks of animals.

In the meantime he had also married both Leah's and Rachel's maids, Bilhah and Zilpah respectively, and had twelve children, that is, twelve at this time, and one born, after he arrived home.

By Leah, he had Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulon and a daughter Dinah. By Rachel, he had Joseph, and later Benjamin; by Bilhah, he had Dan and Naphtali, and by Zilpah, he had Gad and Asher.

Benjamin was the last born and was loved as such, but Joseph was his father's pet and favorite, and was made a great fuss of, in which he seemed to take much delight, and to the disgust of all his step-brothers, before whom, it seems, he took great pleasure in parading his father's preference for him, especially when his father made him a special present of a coat of all sorts of colors. It would have looked like a patchquilt or blanket in these days, but it was very much prized then, and Joseph was the envy of all his brothers and probably all the neighbors.

But to go back a bit. Jacob came home and was received with great heartiness. Of course, he was a rich man now, nothing like the scamp that had to run away from his brother, and perhaps that made a difference. Esau met him in a most open-handed manner, and forgave him handsomely. His father was still alive and was very

pleased to see him. Isaac died when he was one hundred and eighty years of age.

There are two tales told of Jacob in the Bible, which are interesting. One was of the time he was on his flight from home to Laban, when he dreamed he stood at the foot of a ladder reaching into Heaven, and angels were going up and down and God was at top; and God blessed him.

The other was on his return trip to his home with his wives, children and flocks. One night (they slept in the open desert in those warm climates), a man attacked and wrestled with him all the night, but could not get the better of him, and at last, had to beg Jacob to let him go.

He was an angel, and when Jacob, who did not know this, asked him who he was, he in turn, answered that Jacob's name should no longer be Jacob, but he should be called Israel, because he had fought with an angel of God and had prevailed, and that all his descendants should be called the Children of Israel.

These children of Israel are called Jews today, but it was some considerable time, before they were so called. But it was not long after Jacob settled down before they were called Israelites or children of Israel.

Jacob was rather a conceited sort of fellow by the very best inferences we can make from the Bible description, and no doubt was very imaginative; he probably really believed these things happened, and being a very important rich man, persuaded others to believe them too. It was very

easy to make the ignorant people of that period believe anything in the way out of the ordinary, especially if it concerned Gods or Angels or any superstitious advents.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were called the Patriarchs, that is, Fathers, and were believed in implicitly in all they did and commanded.

Jacob lived in Canaan with his family. His wife, Rachel, was dead, having died at the birth of the youngest, Benjamin. Joseph, however, was his father's pet and was the spoiled boy of the family, and naturally his brothers all hated him.

He seems to have been a very conceited boy, too. Once he dreamed that when he and his brothers were binding sheaves of hay in the fields, all their sheaves bowed down to his; another time that the sun, moon and stars worshipped him. Even his father at last had to correct him.

One day when all the ten elder boys were away with the flock, Jacob sent Joseph after them to see how they were getting along. Of course he wore his coat of all the colors of the rainbow.

When they saw him coming, they said, "Hullo, here comes the dreamer," and they began to conspire against him. Reuben, the eldest, was not such a bad sort, and persuaded them to put him in a pit, with the intention of coming back later and releasing Joseph when they were gone; and after some argument, they did so.

Reuben went away, and while he was gone, a caravan of merchants passed by on their way to Egypt, and Judah this time suggested to his

brothers to sell Joseph to these merchants, which they did, and the merchants took him with them and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, a captain in the army of Pharoah, king of Egypt.

The brothers, meantime, killed a goat, dipped the coat in the blood, and sent it to Jacob, saying they had found it. Evidently their conscience would not allow them to relate this false tale face to face with Jacob. Naturally, Jacob thought the boy had been killed by a wild beast, and mourned for him as dead accordingly. In these days, he would have found out quickly that the blood was not human blood.

CHAPTER V

EGYPT

Joseph was carried to Egypt as a slave to Potiphar, (a slave of those days meant nothing like a slave of our recent days) and ultimately became the overseer, or manager of Potiphar's establishment, which office he made a great success of. He had a little trouble with the wife of Potiphar, however; she fell in love with him and tried to induce him to love her, but he would not have anything to do with her, as she was a married woman.

To this day, we speak of a very virtuous (that is morally) man as a *Joseph*, in consequence.

One day, she sent for Joseph, who resisted her advances; she therefore set a trap for him, which he fell into, and was arrested by Potiphar's guard. Potiphar thought Joseph had been making unsolicited love to his wife, which was what the wife had planned to make him think, and had him put in prison. Even in prison, he became a very important person, and was looked up to.

Two of his fellow prisoners were the chief butler and chief baker of the Pharaoh of Egypt respectively. One morning, seeing them very disconsolate, he asked them what the matter was, and they told him that they had each dreamed the previous night, and were worried as to the meaning of their dreams.

In those days, persons set an unlimited importance on their dreams, which they always imagined had influence on their futures. You will even find that today with people of low mentality and ignorance; and until comparatively recent times, all people found significance in dreams.

Joseph asked them to tell him their dreams, which were as follows: the butler dreamed that he held a vine with three branches in his hand, and that he was squeezing the wine from the branches into Pharoah's cup.

Joseph told him that that meant that in three days he would be freed, and restored to his position as butler to Pharoah.

The baker then told his dream: he dreamed that he had three baskets of bread on his head and the birds flew down and ate up all the food, which was intended for Pharoah.

"This," said Joseph, "means that in three days you will be hanged."

And it all occurred as Joseph predicted. You know that if I wrote a story of someone several thousand years after he was dead, I could make him predict any old thing, and what's more, make the prediction come true alright. Perhaps Joseph, being so important in the prison, had heard rumors of what was going to happen to the two prisoners, and it helped him in soothsaying.

Before the butler left the prison, Joseph begged him to remember him, and to try to get him released, which he promised to do, but he

absolutely forgot him once he was out of the gaol. People do not like to remember their shabby acquaintances, when they get on in the world.

A few years passed and this time Pharoah of Egypt dreamed a dream. It seems at this time the Bible ran low on miracles (there are no miracles for quite a few pages) so every now and then, the characters "dream." Anyway, Pharoah dreamed a dream, which was that he stood by a river, and out of the river there came seven fat cows and then seven skinny cows, and the thin cows ate up the fat ones.

He must have enjoyed dreaming, because he went to sleep again and had another dream. Seven ears of corn grew up, good, fat and luscious, then seven thin ears grew up and ate up the ears of good corn.

In the morning Pharoah was troubled about these dreams. He called a meeting of all his household and asked the members to interpret them, but no one could explain them until the butler spoke. "This reminds me" he said, "of the time I was in prison, when your majesty's baker and myself had such strange dreams. There was a young Hebrew gentleman there, who interpreted our dreams for us, and every word came true."

On hearing this, Pharoah sent immediately for Joseph. Joseph came and heard all the foregoing circumstances, and explained it as follows:

"The dreams are all one, and are a warning from God. The seven fat cows and the seven good

ears of corn are seven good years of good crops and plenty in Egypt, which will be followed by the seven thin cows and seven thin ears of corn, which symbolize seven years of the worst kind of famine, which, unless due precaution is taken, will swallow up all the crops of the good years, and famine and starvation will come to us all.

"Now then, let us go ahead and grow all we can in the seven good years; let us grow at least twice as much as we can consume, and store the excess away in warehouses against the time when the bad seven years come."

Pharoah was overjoyed at the advice, and gave Joseph full power to go ahead and put his plans into work; he made him second to himself only, in Egypt, and Joseph went ahead and planted and grew corn and wheat wherever corn and wheat would grow, in every possible field in Egypt, then gathered it up for the bad times to come.

In due course these came, and all the countries were faced with famine except Egypt. Strangers came from all parts with sacks and wagons, to buy corn from the only land that had it to sell. There was nowhere else to obtain it, so they needs must go to Joseph. This is the only time in all history that a successful corner in wheat was made.

Where Jacob had been living in Canaan, all this time it was famine, and Jacob and his sons were all beginning to feel worried at the future.

So Jacob sent them all off to Egypt to buy corn, because he had heard as well as others, that this was the only place where it could be gotten at all in that locality.

He would not let them take Benjamin with them, because he and Joseph were the only children of his favorite wife Rachel, long dead, for, as he said, he had lost Joseph years before, and he did not intend to take any risks of losing his little Benjamin. (Benjamin was probably about forty at the time.) So the other brothers went off to Egypt.

Joseph saw them when they came and recognized them, but pretended not to. They did not know him in his military uniform, with gold and brass trimming and a regular get-up, like a general in command, which he really was. He pretended to be rough with them and called them spies, and threatened to imprison them as such.

They protested their innocence, saying that they were honest men, brothers, sons of one father, twelve sons in all originally, one dead and the youngest at home with their father.

"Well," said Joseph, "we'll prove this. I'll keep one of you here as a hostage, and the rest shall take your corn to Canaan and bring back this younger brother, and if it is so, all will be well with you, but if not, the hostage will die."

This somehow brought back to the men the memory of what they had done to Joseph and they began to reproach themselves in their own lan-

guage, which, Joseph hearing, greatly moved him; he then selected Simeon as hostage, and bidding the others begone, had their asses loaded with corn and sent them away. He had first instructed his men to put the money sent to pay for the corn in each man's sack, and when the brothers discovered this on their way back, they were very startled, as they could see that it had been done purposely, from the fact that each man had his own money intact.

This gave a sinister look to the whole procedure, and so Jacob thought when they got home and told him their tale and he absolutely refused to let Benjamin go to Egypt, and none of their pleas moved him. "I have lost Joseph," he said, "and now Simeon, and if I let Benjamin go, I will lose him too. No—no—no."

CHAPTER VI

ISRAELITES IN EGYPT

But after a while, when all the food was gone, he suggested that they go again to Egypt, and they bluntly refused to go without Benjamin, and after much persuasion, Jacob agreed to let him go with them. They took lots of presents, gifts of all kinds to propitiate Joseph, and double money for the corn, and after a pretty fair journey, they arrived at Joseph's house in Egypt.

When Joseph saw them, he gave instructions to invite them to dinner, which was a great honor, so great, that the brothers were all worried. They spoke to the manager of the grain warehouses about the money they had found in their sacks, but he assured them that it was all satisfactory and that he knew all about it. Then he brought Simeon out to them, and they all went into dinner with Joseph. It was very agreeable and jolly, and they had a very pleasant meal.

Then Joseph gave orders to his steward to fill these men's sacks to the brim with corn, and to put each man's money back in his sack; but in Benjamin's sack, he was to put Joseph's own silver drinking cup. This was done, unknown to the brothers, and after many thanks, the travellers went on their way.

They had not gone very far, when Joseph said to his steward, "Go after these men. Accuse them of having stolen my drinking cup and search

their sacks. When you find the cup, bring them all back to me."

The steward did as he was requested, followed the children of Israel, and accused them as ordered. Of course like honest men, they indignantly denied the theft and declared that if the cup were found in any of their possession, *that* one of them would die. Stealing was a terrible offence in those days, much more so than in these.

The steward took them at their word and searched their sacks, and there sure enough the cup was found in Benjamin's belongings. He therefore arrested them all, and took them back to Joseph, in great grief.

There Joseph reproached them with their treachery and dishonesty, and Judah made a passionate, pleading reply to him, which was really very touching. He explained how confounded they all were at finding the cup in the sack, that it must have been put there by accident; never, never would they have thought of stealing it. Then he told the story of Joseph and Benjamin, how Jacob had refused to part with Benjamin, as he feared disaster on the trip, how if they returned home without Benjamin the old man would die of grief; how, he, Judah had vouched for the safe return of Benjamin, and he begged Joseph (of course never guessing that he was speaking to his own brother) to punish him, Judah, instead of Benjamin, by death or slavery, anything to save the life of their father.

Then Joseph could stand it no longer and he .

revealed himself to his brothers, as that brother they had sold to the Egyptians into slavery, and told them not to fear any retaliation at his hands, as they had unwittingly made his fortune, and incidently saved themselves and many others from famine and starvation. And he embraced and kissed them, especially his own brother Benjamin, and told them to go back to Canaan and fetch their father to Egypt, to stay and settle there.

He told them not to bother about any losses they might sustain in removing their families and goods to Egypt, as he was practically Lord of the country and would give them the best of the land, money, homes, crops, and wealth of all description. He sent them away to their father and loaded their animals with the best sorts of foods, clothing, valuables, but he gave special gifts to Benjamin, and sent others to his father.

At first, naturally, when Jacob heard the news, he did not believe that Joseph could be living, but when he saw all the food, money, clothing and valuables, there was no doubt left in his mind.

"It is enough" he said, "Joseph my son, is living. I will go to Egypt to him."

They all packed then and there, and there were by this time several scores of them, being altogether eleven men, twelve with Jacob, with their wives (and some had more than one wife, if not all of them) and each of them had several children and probably grandchildren, because Jacob's sons were not young men at this time, and travelled down to Egypt, where Joseph and his father were

overjoyed at the meeting, and where Pharoah made them very welcome and gave them large tracts of land to farm and much cattle to breed and raise. And they grew very rich and multiplied very much and raised large families.

However the famine still continued in the land, and Joseph had all the wheat and corn, and got extremely high prices for it. It was worse than a coal strike in these days, and some of us know what that means. When the Egyptians and all the other people had spent all their money paying high prices for their food, Joseph took their cattle in payment, then their land, till they had nothing left but their bodies, and then he made them slave and labor for the corn.

So that he and his family, and Pharoah and *his* family, got very rich and prosperous and pretty well owned everything. Never was known such a case of successful profiteering in all history, since or before.

Then Jacob died. He made his sons swear that they would carry his bones to Canaan for burial when they left Egypt, and they promised this, and mourned for him exceedingly.

Soon after this Joseph died in due course, and then one by one, all his brothers, as they were all advanced in years by this time. Joseph begged his brothers to carry his bones with them also, when they went up from the land to Canaan, and he laid this as a positive promise on them and their descendants, as he did not know what would happen after he was dead. He was well over the century mark at his death.

THEORY OF THE EARTH AND ITS HISTORY

The theory of the earth and its history is a branch of geology which deals with the origin and development of the earth and its various parts. It is a science which seeks to explain the processes which have shaped the earth and its features, and to determine the time and sequence of these processes. The theory of the earth and its history is based on the study of the earth's rocks and fossils, and on the principles of geology. It is a science which is constantly developing, as new discoveries are made and new theories are proposed. The theory of the earth and its history is a branch of geology which deals with the origin and development of the earth and its various parts. It is a science which seeks to explain the processes which have shaped the earth and its features, and to determine the time and sequence of these processes. The theory of the earth and its history is based on the study of the earth's rocks and fossils, and on the principles of geology. It is a science which is constantly developing, as new discoveries are made and new theories are proposed.

Chapter VII

MOSES—THE PLAGUES

Years and years passed by and the Israelites increased in numbers and riches. All those of whom we have written had died long ago, and the new generation knew practically nothing of them that were gone, except by the stories handed from father to son. Joseph's Pharaoh was long dead, and now there was another king in Egypt who knew nothing of Joseph or any of his time.

Now the Egyptians began to look around and saw that the Israelites, who were an alien race to them, owned practically everything in sight and they did not like it and made a mighty uproar about it. Then with the help of the then Pharaoh, they began to oppress the Jews, as the Israelites were beginning to be called. They made life terribly hard for them in every way.

To keep them down or to get rid of them entirely, Pharaoh made a law that all new-born Jewish boy babies should be killed at birth, which was a terrible law, and most inhuman, but people in those days were far from being very human, where their interests were concerned. Just like today, in fact.

At this time there was a man, a descendant of Jacob's son, Levi, who had a baby boy, whom he named Moses. He already had a son, Aaron and a daughter, Miriam. Fearing that Moses would

be put to death under the cruel law of the land, he put him in a basket and had him carried down to the banks of the river Nile, and hidden in the bull-rushes. Miriam stood a little way off to see what would happen and report to her family.

Presently the Princess of Egypt came down to drink, or swim with the ladies of the court, and she espied the basket and had it brought to her. When she opened it and saw the little baby, she decided to let it live and to take care of it herself. Miriam, drawing near, suggested a nurse for the child, and on the princess acquiescing, she brought her own mother, the real mother of the boy. The princess adopted the child, and brought it up as her own.

One version of this pretty story says the child was really the son of the princess, and she used this method to produce him and protect him at court. Anyway, she took him and brought him up as hers, till he was a young man. Of course, his own mother took care to let him know, when he was old enough to realize the significance of it, that he was her son and an Israelite, and instructed him in all that a good Jew should know.

He was what was considered a most presentable young man in those days, but had a lisp in his speech.

One day, when he was grown up, he saw an Egyptian ill-treating an Israelite, because at that time, the Jews were very badly knocked about by the natives, being little more than slaves to the

Egyptians. Moses was so incensed that he struck and killed the Egyptian.

He thought that no one saw him, but a few days later, when interfering in a quarrel between two Israelites, hoping to make peace, one of them reproached him for killing the Egyptian, and asked him, if he thought he could bully everybody, so seeing that his crime was known and that he would get into serious trouble, he ran away to a place called Midian, where he met a girl named Zipporah, married her and settled down with his father-in-law, Jethro, who was a priest of Midian. Here he raised a family and made a living in the fields tending the flocks of Jethro.

While doing so, one day, the Bible says, a voice called to him from the bushes, "Moses, I am the Lord speaking. Go to Pharoah and tell him that I have heard the cries of my people, the Israelites, complaining of his abuses and ill-treatment of them, and he must stop it at once, before I visit him with drastic punishment."

Moses did not relish going to Pharoah; it was rather a ticklish job, perhaps, he thought, so he raised the objection that no one would believe that he came in God's name. God told him, in that event, he was to throw down his rod, which would become a serpent and that would convince all. To convince Moses, God made him throw down his rod then, and it became a serpent, and when God told him to take it up in his hand again, it once more became a rod.

To further convince Moses, God then told him to put his hand into his bosom, and when he drew it out, it was covered with leprosy; God told him to put it back again, and it became cured.

Still Moses was reluctant to go. He pleaded that he was not an easy speaker, had no fluency, and lisped, and was not fit to be the mouthpiece of the Lord, so God gave him permission to take his brother, Aaron, about whom we have heard nothing so far, with him, and Aaron should do the talking at Moses's suggestions.

Moses and Aaron therefore went. It was fairly easy to gain access to the king's palace in those days, as being in such a warm climate, it was built considerably open to the air.

God had however, warned Moses that Pharaoh would reject his demands and it would go very hard with him in consequence, so Moses was prepared for a warm reception.

The story of the life of Moses would be very plausible if it were not for these tales of God appearing to him, and speaking from behind a bush, and then playing tricks with serpents and rods and leprosy and so forth. That part is highly improbable, not to say impossible, and it is more than likely that Moses was led to take the step to approach Pharaoh and to ask for the release of his brethren from a heroic sense of duty and impulse, than from any tuppenny-ha'penny magician's trick, that a bigoted Bible would have us believe.

We may also believe that there was some method and plan in the action of Moses and

Aaron, as they had a meeting with all the leading Jews before they took action, and studied the situation very carefully first.

Anyway to Pharoah they went and made their demands, and naturally Pharoah refused them and threw them out; then he gave instructions that the tasks given the Jews, were to be made harder than ever and that they were to be loaded with restrictions of all sorts. And the Israelites suffered grievously.

Then God called to Moses and Aaron and said, "The time has come for me to redeem the promise I made to your forefathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to bring the Israelites to the land of Canaan, the land of promise. Go to Pharoah and threaten him with dire punishment, unless he release the Jews immediately, and assist them to depart in peace."

Then Moses and Aaron went again to the king, and to shew that they had indeed come in God's name, Aaron threw down his rod and it changed into a serpent. Not to be outdone by this, Pharoah's wise men threw down their rods and they also became serpents, but Aaron's serpents swallowed the other serpents. The Bible omits to tell us what became of Aaron's serpent after that; perhaps Pharoah swallowed it.

Still all this did not move Pharoah, and he still refused to let the Israelites go, so God sent ten plagues to punish him, as follows:

First Plague: The waters of the rivers turned to blood.

Second Plague: An infection of frogs, frogs everywhere, in the streets, houses, in all the rooms, in the closets, beds, everywhere that a frog could get into.

Even the Jews begged for the frogs to be confined to the rivers only.

Third Plague: An epidemic of fleas, lice and nits.

Fourth Plague: Swarms of flies; everywhere, except in the Jewish quarter.

Fifth Plague: Sickness, disease and death to all cattle.

Sixth Plague: Boils on all Egyptians and their animals.

Seventh Plague: Hailstorms and destruction of all crops.

Eighth Plague: Locusts all over the place . . . they ate up all the leaves, and all the green vegetation in the country.

Ninth Plague: Total darkness over the land.

As each of these plagues came on the land, Pharoah promised Moses he would release the Hebrews, if the plagues were stopped; but the moment they stopped, he went back on his word and refused to let them go. When this happened after the ninth plague, God said to Moses, "One more plague only will I send, which will surely cause him to release my people. Prepare all the Jews therefore, gather together all the families, with their jewels and valuables of all kinds, and be prepared for a hurried departure."

(This part of the Bible is called Exodus, which means departure).

Then God sent the tenth and last plague, which was a very dreadful one. He slew all the firstborn, that is the eldest, of the sons of every Egyptian family, even to the cattle, it is said, so that in every family throughout the country, there was a death; but not a single case to the Israelites. Even Pharaoh's family was affected, so that a great and mournful cry arose in the night, in all the land to send the Jews away, to appease God's vengeance.

In the middle of the night, therefore, Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron and begged them, nay, even drove them away, giving them coin, valuables, jewels, presents of every description to go quickly. He was so insistent, and the Israelites wanted little urging, that they even carried their dough for bread on their shoulders, unleavened, that is, without yeast, so great was the anxiety of the Egyptians to get them away before worse evil came to them.

The Jews even borrowed (?) the jewels of the Egyptians, which they gave up with alacrity; in fact, the Bible states that the Israelites spoiled the Egyptians. That means, looted them. That is how the Israelites left Egypt after settling there four hundred and thirty years from the time of Joseph. No wonder Pharaoh knew nothing of him.

On account of the Jews taking with them unleavened bread, every year to this day, Jews all over the world eat unleavened bread for eight

days. At least, it is believed for this reason. The Bible is somewhat contradictory on the subject of unleavened bread. This period is called the Passover, for reasons that will be explained in the next chapter.

While the Bible gives credence to these wondrous miracles of the ten plagues, they were all natural phenomena of the time, place and period, with the exception of the first and last, and no supernatural explanation is necessary to account for them. One followed the other as naturally as could be, that is, if allowance be made for exaggeration in their space of time and sequence.

As regards number one, the rivers being blood, the waters of the Egyptian rivers are not too transparent even that the present day, being a pretty brown at times.

About the last plague, that is the right, correct and natural finish to such a drama, and as a certain great author might say, "preserves the unities," a sort of climax. Most likely, a general plague, in the sense of one of the nature of cholera, which would ensue after such a disastrous sequence of sickness, neglect and filth among a people not particularly noted for cleanliness and sanitary decencies of life.

Chapter VIII

THE WANDERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES— THE COMMANDMENTS

God gave to the Israelites at this time, some very good advice, partly religious and partly sanitary, which was very necessary to these and other people of these hot climes, although requiring considerable modifications for nations of later times and more temperate climates.

The main story of the wanderings of Moses and the children of Israel in the desert after they left Egypt takes many, many chapters of the Bible, and is the greatest mass of nonsense and repetition that was ever written down. Chapter after chapter repeats the same foolish formulas and dogmas, supposed to be the word of God, as translated by the ignorant old hypocrites of a modern age and chewed over at the present day by even a worse set of hypocritical ignoramuses and humbugs.

That any Divine Being would ever have committed the nonsensical rubbish that the Books of Moses contain, is hardly credible and that an intelligent public can be gulled with such tales at this day, is unbelievable. We will cut out as much of the rubbish as we can and deal only with possibilities and matters bearing at all on the Scriptural history.

The Children of Israel left Egypt and wandered in the desert in the neighborhood of the Red Sea. It is said they carried with them the bones of Joseph, which had been buried in Egypt, and who had sworn his brothers to take his bones with them when they or their descendants left there. As it was the custom in Joseph's day to mummify the great dead people, it is quite possible that his bones were fit for transporting, but it is very doubtful if the Jews, in their hurry, had time to think about taking his bones or the opportunity of securing them. However, the Bible says they did take them, and that ultimately the bones of Joseph rested in Canaan, so perhaps it happened.

Before the Israelites arrived at the Red Sea, however, Pharaoh forgot about the troubles with the plagues, and the Egyptians began to miss their slaves and made quite a to-do about it. Pharaoh got together his army and marched after the Jews to capture them. He came up to them at the bank of the Red Sea.

In front of the Israelites was the sea, too wide to cross, and no boats to ferry them across, and behind them, retribution in the form of Pharaoh and his host. They did, under the circumstances exactly what you or I would have done in their place, blamed it on Moses.

"Why didn't you let us alone in Egypt instead of getting us into this trouble. Better be slaves in Egypt than to die in this fashion out here."

Moses advised them not to worry as God would protect them, and in confirmation of his

words, the waters of the Red Sea stood up, like two walls, one on each side, and the Israelites marched across on the bed of the sea to the other side.

Pharaoh and his army immediately followed, and when they were all in the middle of the sea, God caused the waters to return to their place, and all the Egyptians were drowned.

The probability of this tale is that the waters of the sea were low or dried up when the Israelites passed, but when Pharaoh passed, not within a few minutes, but some days later no doubt, heavy rains or torrents had affected the waters and Pharaoh's army was drowned that way, in their desperate eagerness to follow the Israelites.

Maybe the latter passed over in rafts in an easy, clear sky while the others attempted to follow in a squall. Anyway they escaped, and in commemoration of the fact that they "passed over" the Red Sea, to this day they keep the Pass-over Holiday.

It occurs at the same time as the Christians' Easter, and similar Spring holidays that are kept by other religions, and pagan religions too, some of which histories are known to antedate the Jewish history.

The people, however, believed in Moses and all he told them, of speaking and seeing God, although they never really saw or heard him so doing, or in conversation with the Diety.

God now gave to Moses a set of Laws, all of them very good and most, if not all of them, used

today as a basis of moral code for the world at large. Among them were the Ten Commandments, which were as follows, but have been slightly modified by more modern religions than that of the Jews:

1. I am the Lord, thy God, who brought you out of Egypt.
2. Thou must have no other God but I, nor any idols or images.
3. Thou shall not swear or blaspheme.
4. Keep the Sabbath day as holy . . . work six days, but rest on the seventh, you, your families and servants.
5. Respect and obey your parents.
6. Thou shall not commit murder.
7. Thou shall not commit adultery.
8. Thou shall not steal.
9. Thou shall not commit perjury.
10. Thou shall not covet other people's goods or property.

There were other precepts and instructions, but practically all are contained in the above commandments. Death was the punishment for Murder, . . . "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, foot for foot, life for life."

"Thou shall not let a witch live." Now the Bible was translated at a time, in comparatively modern years, when people believed in witches, so you can guess how that was included in the translation.

"Thou shall not raise a false report," pretty

good, but rarely lived up to in these days of unlimited scandal.

"Till the land for six years, but let it rest during the seventh."

"Do not serve idols or images, but break them down wherever they are." Modern religion frequently interprets this to mean that if another does not accord with its religious belief, then Modern religion should have the privilege of wiping the other fellow off the earth.

God also made Aaron High Priest of Israel and all his descendants thereafter, and prescribed a special raiment for him and the other priests to wear, all embroidered in gold, purple, blue, scarlet, with brass and gold trimmings.

Moses had been told to go to the top of a mount, Sinai, to receive these laws from God himself. It was a small hill in the neighborhood in which the Israelites were travelling, and like a good many mountains, the summit was nearly always enveloped in a mist. Moses was supposed to be at the top, speaking face to face to God, who wrote these ten commandments on two stone tablets in his own hand. Moses was said to have been there with God for forty days and nights.

While he was away, the people, wild and ungovernable, though very patient at times, began to get impatient and discouraged at his absence, as all nations would become if their leader disappeared for an indefinite period. They thought he had deserted them and went to Aaron, saying,

“Make us Gods, that we can pray to, because our God has deserted us.”

Aaron, who seems as far as we can judge of his character, from all we know of him, very mild and weak, told them to bring their gold jewels, silver and other valuables, and he melted them down and molded a graven figure of a calf, which delighted the Israelites, who were really a half-savage race at that time, and who worshipped their new God. Then Moses came down from the mount.

He had two tablets of stone with the commandments on them in his hands, and when he saw what had happened while his back was turned, he threw them down and smashed them to pieces.

He was furious, but perhaps these poor ignorant people were not wholly to blame; Aaron was very much more to be censured. Aaron was very apologetic, however, and a little frightened, no doubt, at what he had done (he wasn't High Priest, yet, you know) and of course he blamed the rest of the Israelites.

To make the story short, everybody was frightened and scared at what happened, and a lot of the common people were killed for doing it, then all the others were magnanimously forgiven. Moses made a second trip up the mountain, and got another set of stone tablets from the hand of God (as he told the tribes) and they all promised never to do it again.

One of the leaders who was of service to Moses at this time was named Joshua, a captain, of whom we shall hear a good deal in time.

It is claimed that when Moses came down from the mountain the second time, his face shone as with a halo, and that he ever after had to wear a veil over it when speaking to his fellow men, as the reflection dazzled them. This was supposed to be the reflection of God's countenance.

One of the instructions given to Moses by God was to build a special Ark or Tabernacle, before and to which the Jews were to worship. This was done and Aaron was ordained High Priest, and a number of other men as lesser priests. The Bible spends a good many tedious chapters on describing how this Tabernacle was to be made, and what it was to be made of, none of which is the slightest interest to the ordinary Bible student. Maybe it is of interest to architects and builders, but it is repeated so much and in such detail, that it is needless monotony.

Chapter IX

FURTHER WANDERINGS OF THE ISRAELITES

There are many chapters in the Bible on the life of Moses, all grouped together under the title of Leviticus, which are given to commandments and restrictions imposed upon the Israelites by God, or in the name of God, all through the mouth of Moses. Some of these injunctions are very wonderful and are evidence that they could not have been of the moment, but evolved through a series of ages or years.

Others are so ridiculously foolish that it is by the exercise of mere common sense that we can see that God could never have issued such non-sensical instruction.

Others such as to "punish wizards by death," shew the hands of the superstitious translators of the Bible of a comparatively recent period.

Many chapters are given to instruction on burnt offerings, in which under circumstances that would have kept the Israelites doing nothing else all the time. Rams, Pigeons, Doves, Goats and other animals were to be sacrificed to the Lord, as if there could be any satisfaction to God in such a senseless proceeding.

However, the Jews were instructed in their eating and diet, which advice was exceedingly

good and applicable today, for almost all people, allowing of course for difference in climatic conditions and other local circumstances. For instance, they were only to eat the flesh of animals that were cloven-footed and chewed the cud, and no flesh of animals that died natural deaths, and eat no blood; of fish, to eat only those with fins and scales; of birds, none like the eagle, vulture, raven, kite, hawk, etc.

There was also much instruction and advice of treatment of disease, especially skin diseases, such as scabs, leprosy, etc. Now remember, these Israelites were not civilized in the sense that we call ourselves so today, but more like a crowd of Arab nomads, neglectful, dirty and self-neglecting, subject particularly to these diseases, which come so frequently from dirty surroundings and habitual want of sanitation, and neglect of the body.

Moses, whatever he may have been otherwise, knew how to handle this army of wanderers, and by mysticism and threats of Divine wrath, was able to keep some semblance of order and decency among them.

God also gave great moral laws on the relation of man and woman, in this part of the Bible. This is part of the moral code of all civilized communities today, and without it, this would be a world of degenerates.

Barring the constant repetition and monotony of this part of the life of Moses, it is probably the most instructive of any of its chapters.

The next part of the story of Moses is called Numbers, and is concerned in the taking of the census of the Jews, and although the method of computing and the figures are most confusing, and would require an expert accountant to dissect them, it seems that the Israelites all told, must have amounted to about a million. The modern Jews are accused of grossly exaggerating in figures on all occasions, and perhaps they already had the habit in the desert. Still there must have been a lot of them, and Moses had his hands full in keeping them in any kind of order. They were a most troublesome lot, by all accounts.

During all their wanderings in the desert (the Bible calls it the Wilderness) whenever they ran short of anything, such as water, food, provender, which is about every second page of the Bible, they blamed Moses, and wanted to know why he hadn't left them alone in Egypt, where they were better off than they were now.

At last, Moses, who is described as a very meek man, got sick of the whole thing and complained to God, "Why is the work of leading these troublesome people given to me? They ask for meat. I have none."

God promised Moses that they should have plenty of meat and sent a flock of quail, which the people flew to eat, and the Bible says that as they were eating the birds, God smote them dead.

Perhaps God was very angry with the people, but hungry people can be excused for grumbling, and it is very much to be doubted that God did

anything of the sort. What is more likely is that the people, famished from want of food, gorged themselves on the rich meat, raw or cooked, and made themselves sick, several dying from it, which would be a much more natural possibility. Moses would naturally too, use the circumstances to point a lesson, and call it a punishment on them. But the Bible now announces other miracles.

Moses had married a black woman, an Ethiopian, and as in most families, ancient and modern, the family of Moses did not like her, and Aaron and Miriam criticized her. Moses, the meek, said nothing, but God heard and struck Miriam with leprosy. Aaron begged Moses to intercede with God, and God cured Miriam after a week. This would shew God to be rather partial, as I should suggest that Aaron, if anybody, should have been struck with the leprosy.

The Jews were getting near the Promised Land of Canaan, and Moses like a good general, sent out men to spy out the place. Joshua was one of the captains and was at the head of them. They were away several weeks and came back with lovely grapes, pomegranates and figs, and reported a lovely place, flowing with "milk and honey." They also reported that there were a lot of enemies there, some were giants, sons of Anak, Amonites, Canaanites, and so forth.

At this the Israelites got scared, and began to rate Moses for bringing them out of Egypt, and some of them suggested deposing Moses, appointing a new leader and returning there.

God threatened to punish all the people, by word of Moses, which quieted them, but He said that as a punishment and example for them, all those that had murmured, should never live to enter the Holy Land.

A short time after this, a rebellion broke out among some of the worst malcontents, but just as they were going ahead to make trouble, a lot of them fell into a pit and that quashed the revolt. The Bible says that God opened the earth where they were. Sickness broke out shortly after this, a sort of cholera, and it is said that nearly fifteen thousand persons perished.

Perhaps Moses, who had his eyes and ears open, knew more about the pits than he admitted.

A little later, Miriam died, and they all mourned for her. Then they travelled on in the desert, and now, on one occasion, ran out of water, which brought more murmurings and mutterings; Moses said he would commune with God, and after doing so, as he said, led the people to a rock, and saying to them, "How now, must we bring water out of the rock for you," smote it with his rod, and water gushed out, plenty for all the people.

Moses probably understood the nature of the country they were travelling in, and was indeed the right man for such a situation.

God, however, was angry with Moses for using the expression, "Must WE," and felt he had presumed beyond his position, and as a penalty, decreed that he, Moses, should also not live to set

foot in the promised land. Possibly Moses did not care very much by this time. He was an old man now, and rather lonely, especially as soon after, Aaron died and was buried with great honors by the Israelites.

The people, who had been wandering now for close on forty years (they must have been going in a circle, as people do sometimes in a desert) were tiring of this nomadic life, and were constantly fighting and arguing with Moses; one of these arguments came up now, and God, so the Bible says, sent fiery serpents among them, which killed very many of them; the trouble was stopped by Moses making a brazen model of a snake, and all who were bitten and looked on this dummy, recovered.

That sort of story is hardly believable, but it might be just about as true as the other miracles.

Chapter X

DEATH OF MOSES—JOSHUA

The Israelites travelled onward, but now they neared several antagonistic tribes and had several little fights, but won them all. They fought the Canaanites, Amonites, Og, king of Bashan, and a number of others.

In time they came to a place called Moab, now it is believed known as the city of Jericho, on the River Jordan. Balak was king of Moab, and was much scared at their approach; so he sent for a very wise old man, a Moabitish priest, named Balaam, to come and curse the Israelites, little as they cared for his curses.

Why Balaam could not have done it just as well at home, or while Balak did not do it himself from his palace or hut, or whatever sort of a shed he held his court in, I do not know, but anyway, he sent to Balaam to come to Moab to do the cursing.

Balaam mounted his ass and started on the trip, but an angel of God met him on the way. The animal, being only an ass, saw the angel in his way and stopped. Balaam being a double kind of an ass, did not see the angel and urged on the ass; and when the animal refused to go, whipped him violently.

The ass spoke to Balaam, and said, "Why do you beat me? Can you not see the angel of God ahead?"

At this, Balaam opened his eyes and sure enough, he saw the angel. No doubt, after hearing the donkey speak, he could believe he saw anything.

The angel warned Balaam on no account to curse the Israelites, but to bless them, and when Balaam came to Balak, that is exactly what he did. The Bible does not say in what way the Israelites were bettered by his blessing, nor in what way his curses would have injured them, but it is a pretty story, and if you can believe it, it absolutely does you no harm.

Still, if I had been the ass, I think I would have taken a chance, and bucked Balaam over my head, especially with the angel standing by, or bit him in the calf of his leg. It seems strange, too, that so much stress should be laid on Balaam's blessing or cursing of the Jews, considering that he was an alien enemy.

After this, the Jews came to Moab and began to fraternize with the Moabites, and even intermarried with them in some cases, and worshipped their gods, which was dead against their religion and the laws of the Lord, as given to Moses, especially in the commandment, "Thou shall have no other Gods but me."

Another sickness or plague broke out among them, which Moses told them was a visitation for their misdeeds. And the people believed and turned from their bad ways for a time.

Now Moses announced that Joshua would be his successor, being at the time, the general of his

forces. There was now a fight with the Midianites, whom the Israelites beat, and in which Balaam was killed. This brought the people nearer to Jericho. God told them, of course through Moses, that they were to pass over the River Jordan, and destroy all before them, and capture and inherit Canaan, which land was to be divided into parts, one for each tribe of the Jews, each tribe being descended from a son of Jacob, or Israel.

Moses wished to see the land of Canaan, which however, God had prohibited him from ever entering, but the Lord told him to go to the top of Pizgah, which is Mount Nebo, and look around north, south, east and west.

Then Moses died and was buried by God, . . . at least no one ever saw him again after he disappeared in the mist on top of the mount. The people then accepted Joshua as his successor and their leader.

The final chapters of the story of Moses, as told in the Bible, are a complete review of all that has been written heretofore, as told to the people by Moses: a full explanation by him of the laws, with their rewards and punishments, and would be too tiresome to detail here. Nothing can be learned from these chapters that has not been learned previously.

God now spoke to Joshua, "Go out to Canaan, and every spot you tread on I will give to you. No one will be able to contend with you." This is what Joshua now told the people. As a good general, he had probably studied the ground and

knew that he held command of the situation; secondly, it does not hurt an army, especially when priest-ridden and superstitious to the —th degree, to be told that their God or Gods have promised to win all their battles for them; then again Joshua, though a good, hard-headed, practical man, had no doubt a very superstitious vein in him, too, and was somewhat of a visionary.

Like all the wandering tribes in the desert, he imagined or believed that the mantle of Moses had descended to him and that God did actually appear to him. Anyway the Jews were greatly encouraged.

He sent two spies to Jericho first, anyway, to see what the prospects were. They found a lodging with a woman of low morals (the Bible is not so courteous in referring to her) of the name of Rahab and she looked after them.

The king of Jericho heard of them and sent to Rahab to produce them, but she hid them and told the king that they had departed long ago.

The king, not being very brilliant evidently, took her at her word and did not search for them (they were hidden on the roof of her house all the time) and later on she assisted them to escape, first extracting from them a promise that they would protect her and her family when they captured the city, which of course they agreed to, and which promise they kept in good faith later.

The spies returned to Joshua and gave him all the details of defense of the city, and how all the

inhabitants were already scared at the approach of the Israelites.

Then Joshua prepared to cross the Jordan, and did so with all his army. The Bible tells the story of the waters of the river standing up, so that the people passed over on dry land. This is much like the Red Sea incident to warrant much belief. Joshua had heard the story from the elders of the Israelites no doubt, and perhaps he thought it would work a second time. This time the Bible does not state that God had anything to do with separating the waters, and it is not possible that Joshua could work miracles by himself.

No, the River Jordan was probably very low in water, at this time of the year, and the Israelites just waded across like ordinary human beings.

There were about forty thousand fighting men, according to the Bible.

At this time an angel of the Lord appeared to Joshua, though for what reason it is not apparent.

The Israelites prepared to attack Jerusalem, but God told Joshua that all he had to do, was to walk round the outside walls of the city, he and the priests and the Ark, and the soldiers for six days, but on the seventh day they were to do it seven times; then they were to blow lustily on their trumpets and the people to shout with all their might, and then the walls would fall down flat and the Jews could enter at their leisure.

The only weakness in this fable is, that it would engender working on the Sabbath, which God absolutely forbade himself, but a little mix-up

like that, the translators of the Bible did not trouble about.

However, everything came out just as foretold, and the city was captured and every one of the enemy killed. Of course, there was quite a deal of looting, a thing strictly forbidden, but the leader was caught and put to death, stoned, a style of capital punishment, much in vogue with these people.

Still there were a considerable number of little kings and their tribes, and they combined against Joshua, as they had no chance by themselves separately. There was also one tribe of Gibeonites, who decided that they had better take steps to protect themselves by allying with the Jews, rather than against them.

They knew the religion of the Israelites demanded that all their enemies be wiped out root and branch, so it was no good asking for terms of surrender, so they thought of a stratagem to escape. They dressed in old clothes, old shoes, put dust on their raiment and their heads, just as though they had come from a great distance, and took dry and musty provisions with them, and came to Joshua and said, "We come from a far country to make a league with you."

Joshua was suspicious and asked several questions, but they were too smart for him, and finally he made a special peace and league with them. He does not seem to have shown his usual acumen, but great men have weak moments. Still elders of the Jews, who are not usually a foolish race,

should have found out the truth, ere coming to an agreement. They didn't, however, until several days after the treaty was signed, and then they were in a quandary.

Having already sworn a peace, they could not go back on their word. All the heads of the priests wagged together for hours, and then they decided to let these men live, but to make slaves of them, "drawers of water and hewers of wood" which was done. Anyway their lives were saved; whether they were worth saving is a matter of opinion.

When all the other kings or chiefs heard how the Gibeonites had made a separate peace with Israel, they attacked Gibeon, but Joshua came to their aid and defeated their enemies badly, and chased them away for miles, while a big hailstorm came up and great stones fell from Heaven and killed numbers of the enemy while running.

Then as the day was declining, and it was getting towards dusk, when there was a chance of some of the enemy escaping, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, not to go down, and the moon also to stand still, so that he should have light to slaughter all the evening, and the Bible tells us that the sun and moon *did* stand still. As we are told that the sun usually stands still, while the earth revolves, Joshua should have told the earth to stand still, which no doubt it would have accomodatingly done.

Be it as it may, Joshua won all the battles and killed all the enemy kings and took city after city,

camp after camp, and wiped out everyone of the Canaanities. No one was allowed to surrender or make peace, but all were killed and utterly destroyed, if the Bible can be relied upon.

And yet he could not have killed them all, for as soon as the Bible says they were all done away with, another batch of kings would spring up and Joshua and his army would have to go out and slay them. This shows how loosely the whole story of the Bible was pieced together by its rude translators.

Joshua was growing old and worn out. He had been a soldier all his life and had never known rest of any description. He felt that he could not live very much longer, so he called the elders together and exhorted them to keep the people as one nation when he was dead, and to stand staunchly and steadfastly together, to follow the word of God, and be good God-fearing men.

He died shortly after this and was buried with much pomp.

At this time, the Bible mentions that the bones of Joseph (that is, Joseph of the dreams) were buried at a place called Shechem, because it seems the Children of Israel had been carrying them with them in the wilderness all this time a matter of forty or fifty years, beside the several hundred years they had been lying in Egypt.

Chapter XI

JUDGES

After Joshua's death the Israelites were ruled by a number of leaders or Judges, as they were called, few of whom attained any importance. There was always fighting going on with some or the other of the Canaanites, who evidently came to life over and over again.

The tribe of Judah took the lead on the part of the Israelites, and captured, among other cities, the town of Jerusalem and many others, then the rest of the tribes captured other cities, but they did not obey the command of God to destroy all their enemies, but let them live and even lived among them and married their men and women. They worshipped their Gods, so that the Lord became very angry with them, and they were defeated in several battles in consequence.

It is hardly to be believed that God especially put himself out to have them defeated by those most opposed to Himself, but the most natural explanation of these defeats is that the Israelites as a race, had degenerated after they had taken to soft living for several years, after so many years of self-denial and hard trials, and it was this weakened condition that made them an easy prey for their enemies. This has been known to be the case with more modern people.

Then came a new race of enemies of the Jews, the Philistines, a very strong, hard fighting nation, who could always be relied upon to make no end of trouble. These Philistines and many thousands of other Canaanites of various sorts, worsted the Israelites in a series of engagements, and made them their slaves for a considerable number of years, till a left-handed man, named Ehud, killed their worst oppressor, the king of Moab, liberated the Hebrews and became their Judge, or leader.

Then having become very soft from good times following, the Israelites did evil again in the sight of the Lord, and were defeated by another king of Canaan, Jabin, whose general's name was Sisera, and who was a very great and famous soldier.

The children of Israel cried as usual to God, for help, and help came at the hands of Deborah, a prophetess, who was the Judge of the land at the time. She sent for an Israelitish soldier, Barak, and told him to get his forces together and attack Sisera, as she had vision to see that he could defeat Sisera.

This he did, and sure enough, he defeated the Canaanites, and Sisera had to flee for his life, till he came to the tent of a woman, named Jael, who he had reason to believe, was friendly towards him. She came out to greet him, and making many professions of good-will, invited him in to rest and recover his strength, and gave him milk and food.

Needing rest, he begged her to watch over him while he slept, which she promised to do, but when he was sound asleep, she took a hammer and nail and drove it through his temple, and he died. Nothing very creditable to her, and nothing more unlikely that it ever happened in the manner mentioned.

After this, there were a good many more Judges for some years. There was much more fighting with all the neighboring tribes; when the Israelities won, they behaved themselves for a number of years then they went back on God, which always led to a punishment in the form of a crushing defeat at the hands of one or the other of their foes and their enslavement for a time by their victor; this would lead them to cry to the Lord, and relief came in one form or another, usually in the raising of a leader, who fought their way out of the hands of their enemy.

Nothing of any moment occurred until a man named Samson was born. At this time, the Israelites were in the hands of the Philistines, to whom we have referred before; they had been oppressed by them for forty years, and no help had come to them in all this time.

It had been foretold to the parents of Samson, that he would be very, very strong and this came true. When he grew up, no one could touch him for his great strength. The whole secret, it appears, lay in the fact of his hair, which he wore very long, but this was known to his parents and himself only.

He married a woman of the Philistines, and although that ought to have been regarded as an awful crime in those days among the Jews, the Bible rather slurs over the incident. On his way to seek his bride, the story goes, he met a lion and killed it with his bare hands. He wedded this woman, but she turned out to be false to him, and he got rid of her.

He seems to have been very fond of her however, and went after her again, and when she and her father were injured by the Philistines, he went out and killed lots of them. So the Philistines called on the men of Judah to capture Samson and bind him and turn him over to them for punishment.

They did so, and bound him with ropes and brought him to his enemies, who shouted for joy at seeing him so helpless, but he exerted his strength and burst the ropes just like they were flax, and finding a handy rod (it is said a jawbone of an ass) he laid about him and slew a *thousand* men. Jawbones of asses have been known to do an infinite amount of damage, but surely never as much as this.

After this, he rounded up the Israelites, brought them out of the bondage of the Philistines and ruled them for twenty years.

One day, during this period, he went to visit a woman that he liked at a town called Gaza, in the land of the Philistines, and spent the night at her house. The Philistines soon found out that

he was there, so they locked the gates of the city, that he should not get away.

Samson was warned of this, so he rose at midnight, went down to the gates, found them locked, broke them open, and escaped, carrying the gates, doorposts, bolts and everything with him.

Later on he fell in love with a woman named Delilah, and the heads of the Philistines bribed her to find out the secret of his great strength. She set about the task and he gave her several explanations, because he did not quite trust her, much as he loved her. So she tested him every time, and each time she found that he had fooled her.

But a man in love with a woman can always be made a fool of in the end, unless he is too cold-blooded to be naturally human. This has always been the tale in real life, and always will be till the end of all time. One day, when Delilah got him into a state of adoration, when he was wildly infatuated with her, and she reproached him with his want of confidence in her, he swore her to secrecy and told her that the secret of his strength lay in the length of his hair.

She immediately informed the Philistines of this, and they paid her liberally for her success in finding it out. Then when Samson was asleep, (she probably drugged him) she had his hair cut off by a barber, and his strength deserted him. The Philistines captured him, taking him very easily in his weakened condition, blinded him, and put him in prison.

Now they prepared to make a feast to their

God, Dagon, to whom they gave credit for delivering their enemy into their hands. The feast came off in due course, and the Philistines got very drunk and had a very merry time, indeed.

When they were in a state of riotousness that they hardly knew what they were about, they sent for Samson to laugh at him and make sport of him, and he was led in by a little lad and placed between the heavy pillars of the palace in which the feast was given, and which was filled by thousands of men and women feasters.

They had forgotten that his hair had grown in the meantime, and with it his strength had come back, and as he stood there between the pillars, in misery, blind and helpless, he prayed to God for help and said, "Let me see if only I can revenge myself on my enemies," then grasping the posts in both hands, and exerting all his magnificent strength, he pulled the palace down upon himself, and all the people it contained were killed. The Israelites found his bones and gave him a decent burial.

Then for a number of years there was no regular ruler over the Jews, and everybody did what he or she pretty well liked, subject only to the prejudice of his neighbors. This led to considerable disputes and fighting among themselves, during which the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out entirely.

Chapter XII

RUTH—SAMUEL—SAUL

About this time there was a widow of the name of Naomi; she had two sons, whose names are of no particular consequence, both married, but their wives were named respectively Orpah and Ruth. They lived in a place called Beth-le-hem Judah, but when a famine came they moved to Moab. This was, however, before Naomi's husband died.

At Moab, the husband and both sons died, and Naomi desired to return to her home town, especially as the famine was over. She told her daughters-in-law to leave her and go their ways, as she was only a handicap to them, and they would probably have a chance of finding other husbands, without the incumbrance of her on their hands. They both protested and said that they would go with her but she persuaded them again, and Orpah with many protestations of regret and love, went her way.

But Ruth said however, "Do not ask me to leave you, for where you go, I will go; your people shall be my people, your home mine, your God, my God. As long as you live, I will stay and live with you and take care of you, now that you are entirely alone." So they stayed together.

When they arrived at Beth-le-hem Judah, a man said to Naomi, seeing that she had so greatly

changed, "Can this be Naomi?" and she replied, "Rather call me Mara, for I have had bitter times." (Mara means "bitter.").

Ruth had to work in the fields to support herself and her mother-in-law, so she got employment with a rich relation of Naomi, named Boaz, who noticed her in passing, and fell in love with her. He inquired about her and hearing nothing but good of her, especially in the matter of her self-denial with her husband's mother, he asked her to marry him, which she did, and they lived very happily together. They had a son whom they named Obed, and later on when he was a man, he had a son, Jesse, whose son was named David, a famous king, warrior and poet, about whom we shall hear a good deal presently.

About this time (the Bible is very vague entirely throughout in regard to dates) the High Priest or Judge of Israel was named Eli and his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were also priests.

To Eli, came the wife of a well-known man of Israel, and begged him to pray to God to give her a son. It was considered a terrible thing in those days for a woman to have no children, that is, sons, as daughters were not of much account, and Hannah's husband, Elkanah, had another wife, Peninah, who had children, although Hannah was the older and better loved wife. Consequently Hannah was in a terrible state of affliction at having no children.

She cried to God, and vowed that if God gave her a son, she would consecrate him to his service,

in plain language, make him a priest. She was so upset when she came to Eli that he thought she was drunk (the Bible is very explicit on this point) and he reproved her.

He soon found out that he was mistaken, however, and promised her that she should have a son. No doubt he felt that he owed her some sort of an apology for mistrusting her, and took the opportunity of consoling her. So she felt satisfied and went home to her husband and sure enough, in due course she bore a son, whom she called Samuel.

She reared the child till he reached boyhood, probably about thirteen years of age, and then took him to Eli, to be brought up in the service of the Lord. This was a great comfort to Eli, as his own sons had turned out to be bad rascals, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the fact that they were priests of this very corrupt period.

Samuel lived with Eli, in the house consecrated to God, and one night, after trimming the lamp in the Temple and lying down to rest, God called him, and he, thinking that Eli had called, answered "Here I am," and ran to Eli. Eli, who was nearly blind, being now a very old man, told him he was mistaken, and to go back to sleep, which he did.

The same thing happened again a little later that night, and again Eli told him to lie down. When God however, called him a third time, and he ran to Eli, thinking that it was he, and asked what he wanted, then Eli knew that God had called Samuel, and that the latter, being so young

a lad, did not recognize that the Lord had called.

He therefore told Samuel to go back to his bed, but that if he heard the voice again, to answer, as it was the Lord was calling him.

Then God called again, "Samuel, Samuel," and he replied, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Then God told him that he intended to destroy the house of Eli, on account of the wickedness of his sons. Then the Lord left Samuel, who went to sleep again.

Of course there is little doubt that Samuel, brought up to be a priest, among a lot of pious, narrow-minded priests and unwordly men, years beyond his age, was inclined to be dreamy, moody and visionary, and it is not at all surprising he should dream of matters of this description, but that the Bible should record that the Lord appeared to him just to threaten to destroy the house of Eli, is beyond comprehension, or common sense.

Of course, perhaps unknown to Eli, there had been much doleful prognostication of what would happen to him and his family with his sons' goings-on, but that is what would happen at any place, time and community under similar circumstances.

Samuel must have heard the old washer-women, male and female, many a time discussing the bad conditions, and no doubt brooded on it.

The following morning Eli naturally wanted to know what God had spoken of to Samuel, and

Samuel told him. Then Samuel's fame spread and everybody recognized him as a prophet of the Lord. Nearly all prophets from the beginning of the world until today, started off by having visions or visitations, so surely Samuel was entitled to one or two.

Now the word of Samuel came to the Israelites to go out and fight the Philistines which they did, and got very badly beaten, for which of course, the people wanted to know the why and wherefore. After much deliberation and shaking of heads, they came to the conclusion that it was due to the fact that the Ark of God was not with them. No doubt, it was lying in some spot, neglected and forgotten about.

So they sent for it and went out with it in their midst to meet the enemy and had a bigger fight, and got a much worse beating: not only that but the Ark was captured by the Philistines and Eli's two sons were killed. And when the news of his sons' death reached Eli, the shock killed him, and thus the whole family of Eli was wiped out.

The Ark was like a white elephant to the Philistines. They knew it was holy or magic in some way, so they took it to their town of Ashdod and placed it next to their idol, Dagon, and left it there over night.

When they came in the morning Dagon had fallen over on his face, so they put him back again. But the following morning, they found the same thing had occurred, only this time, for good measure, the Bible tells us, Dagon had lost his head,

and the *PALMS OF HIS HANDS--ONLY THE STUMP OF DAGON WAS LEFT.*

Then in great fright, they moved the Ark to another city, and some misfortune befell that city, then to another city, which also had trouble, so they sent it back to the Israelites, with a polite message and presents of goodwill.

Then Samuel told the people, "If you give up your idols and return to God, He will save you from and defeat the Philistines," which the people did, and God forgave them; then getting a great army of all the fighting men, they went out and smashed up the Philistines, and recaptured all the cities that their enemy had taken from them. Of course, when all the tribes joined together again, under Samuel's generalship, after having been split into a dozen different clans, each going his own way previously, and with their lives and liberty at stake, it is not surprising that they were, able to overthrow the Philistines.

After this there was peace for a little time, while Samuel ruled or judged the nation. He lived at Ramah, but travelled on a regular circuit during the year, from Beth-el- to Gilgal and Mizpah and all around the country.

Samuel grew old and put the management of affairs into the hands of his sons, who were dishonest and corrupt in every way. Then the children of Israel came to Samuel and said, "Here now, you are old, and your sons are bad. Give us a king like other nations."

This grieved Samuel, for the commandments

instructed the Jews to look to God only as their King; but he prayed to Heaven for guidance and God told him not to worry, that if the people wanted a king he would give them one and they would see how they would like it.

So Samuel told them that he would find a king for them if they were sure they wanted one, but he warned them that the king would take them and their children for soldiers and slaves, to fight to order, to reap and make arms for war, and would take part of their wealth for his perquisites as king, and that they would be very sorry for it later, when it was too late; they would then cry to the Lord when it was too late and God would not listen to them. "Nevertheless," said the people, "give us a king."

There was a young man named Saul, the son of a man named Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was one of the tallest, best built and best looking of the Israelites. He came one day to Samuel seeking some advice on the cattle of his father, which had strayed.

For all the importance the Bible attaches to Samuel's office, it appears that Saul was neither acquainted with Samuel's fame or standing in the community; but Samuel expected him to come, as God had warned him that a man such as he would come at that time, and that he was to be anointed king.

So when Saul at last found Samuel and asked him about the cattle, Samuel told him not to worry, that the cattle had been found but that

everybody's eyes were fixed on Saul. Naturally Saul asked why, and Samuel told him that God had appointed him to be king of Israel; but Saul replied, "How can that be? Am I not of the tribe of Benjamin, the youngest of the tribes and the smallest? My family is the least of all the families of the tribe, too."

Samuel told him not to worry, the Lord had so decreed it, and took him to his house, and made him sit in the chief place among a crowd of people. Next day he poured some oil on his head and anointed him king. Then he called a meeting of the tribes, and selecting Saul from them all, presented him to the people, and all the people shouted, "God save the king."

Then Samuel wrote the constitution of the kingdom in a book and went away, and it seems that Saul also went home.

Only a great many of the people sneered and said, "How will this man save and protect us?" and despised him. But he said nothing. But shortly afterwards, some of the tribes had trouble with the Amorites (or Philistines) and things looked very serious for them. Saul came along, took command, and defeated the foe with great slaughter, and then the people recognized him as king, and rejoiced at his selection.

Chapter XIII

DAVID

Saul was married and had a son named Jonathan who was trained to be a soldier, the same as his father was. He was a very brave young fellow, and was constantly in the thick of many battles that were now fought, and did some splendid work. Saul did not rest until he had secured the kingdom from all aggressors and driven his enemies away. No sooner had he finished in one part of the land than war broke out in another.

Remember the country was by no means settled; the people lived in tents and huts and were very nomadic, very much like the Arab dwellers of the more recent days, in all probability not near so civilized. Nations lived and died by violence, and might ruled.

Saul had other sons and two daughters, Michal and Merab. The chief of his captains was his cousin, Abner, another Benjaminite.

Samuel told Saul to go out and fight a very fierce nation, the Amalakites; we have had the name before; they were one of the tribes that the Bible tells us in the history of Joshua, that were wiped out entirely, but evidently the Bible is wrong herein.

Samuel told Saul to destroy them utterly, men, women and children, babies and all their flocks. This last certainly was a most foolish suggestion, and it is very doubtful that Samuel ever

ordered such a thing or made any similar suggestion. This is the sort of thing that is repeated so often in the Bible elsewhere, and its constant repetition proves the unlikelihood of it ever having been ordered at all.

Saul went up and killed all the people of the Amalakites with the exception of their king, Agag, and what was more sensible, all the flocks. This infuriated Samuel, who, as head of the Israelitish priesthood, determined to rule the king and the masses, the same as other churches have tried to do since that day to their cost, and he came to Saul and reproached him in the name of God, and told him that he would be deposed as king of Israel because he had spared Agag and his helpless herds.

Saul asked him to intercede with God for him, but the obdurate old prophet refused to do so, and turned away. Saul grasped his coat to hold him and in doing so tore it, which, Samuel, quick to take advantage of the incident, told him it meant as he (Saul) had rent his (Samuel's) garment, so the Lord had rent his kingdom. Then Samuel had Agag killed and left Saul never to see him again.

Now the Lord told Samuel to go to the house of a man called Jesse, that was a descendant of Ruth, and anoint one of his sons king. Jesse lived in Beth-le-hem.

To give you an idea how the priests kept the people in a state of fear with their dark threats of punishment by God, unless they did this or that at the priest's demand, it seems that when Samuel

arrived at this town, the elders trembled and asked him, "Do you come in peace?"

They always identified the visits of the priests and prophets with some fatality or other.

Samuel assured them that he had come with the very best intentions, and asked to be directed to Jesse's house. There he asked to see Jesse's sons, and they deployed before him, but he saw none that answered a possible selection for king. So he asked if there were any others after all had filed past him.

"Yes," said Jesse, "the youngest, but he is minding the sheep."

Samuel sent for him and as he set eyes on him he knew that this was the Lord's selection. He was ruddy of countenance and very good looking. So Samuel took some oil and anointed him king in the midst of his family, who no doubt stared their eyes out at the ceremony. Then Samuel went home.

Now Saul was in a very ill humor, owing to what Samuel had said to him, and his servants suggested that they should get a player on the harp to come to play to him to drive away the blues. Saul told them to go ahead and get a good musician. One of the servants remembered by a great coincidence, that David, the son of Jesse, was a very good harpist, besides being, as he said, a very brave soldier and very clever and "the Lord is with him." How the servant knew this, the Bible does not state, but there it is, set down in black on white.

So they sent for David to come and amuse the king, and Saul liked him immediately he saw him, and made him his armor-bearer. And David played the harp and amused Saul, and whenever he was moody or depressed, cheered him up with the playing.

The Philistines had been quiet for quite a time, but now they got their armies ready and came up to attack the Israelites, forming a big camp, near where the Israelites were also encamped. Among them was a mighty giant, named Goliath, about ten feet four inches. He must have been the biggest man that ever lived. He wore a brass helmet and a coat of mail. The coat weighed about one hundred and seventy pounds, besides which he had brass leggings and brass shoulder protectors; the head of his spear is said to weigh close on to twenty pounds. All told he must have looked an awful sight.

He had the nasty habit of coming out in the field that separated the two camps every day and defying the Israelites. He would call out to them, "Send a man down here to meet and fight me. If I win, you shall all be our slaves, and if your man wins, we will be your slaves. I defy you all and dare you to come out here."

When Saul and the Israelites heard this they were greatly dismayed and scared. And Goliath did this every day for forty days, twice a day.

David was home at the time, attending to his father's flocks, but he now came back bringing some food to his brothers, who were in the army.

He was speaking to them at the front, when the giant came out with his challenge.

Some of the Israelites said, "Is there no man among us who will go up against Goliath? Behold, the king will make him very rich and honor him, and give him his daughter for wife." (Isn't that just like the stories we used to read when children?).

David begged Saul to let him go and fight Goliath, but Saul refused, saying, "What chance would a boy like you have with such a man?"

David replied, "When I tended my father's sheep, they were attacked by a lion and a bear, and I slew them both." David or the Bible surely made an error, as lions and bears do not mix in David's country, unless they had escaped from a zoo, which was hardly likely in those days. Ultimately Saul let him go, and gave him a helmet and a suit of mail, but they were so heavy he could not move in them. So he took them off.

All he took with him were five heavy stones, and his sling to aim them, and so equipped, he went out to meet Goliath, who, as soon as he saw him, cried, "What, am I a dog that you come to me with stones?" And he swore at him and taunted him, and told him to come nearer so that he could kill him quickly and give his flesh to the wild birds and beasts.

But David answered, "You come to me with armor and a sword and a spear and a shield; but I come to you in the name of the Lord God of Israel, and I will kill you and give your flesh and

the flesh of all the Philistines to the birds and beasts this day." With that he took a stone from his bag and slung it at the giant and knocked him senseless. Then running up to him, he took Goliath's own sword and cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw this, they fled, and the Israelites pursued them and defeated them with great slaughter.

(Here comes a curious lapse in the Bible. *Now* it says that Saul asked Abner, the captain of his host, "Who is this young man? And Abner said, "Oh, king, I cannot tell."

"Ask," said the king, So they brought David forward to the king, who asked him who he was, and David told him.

Why, all along, the Bible has had David playing to the king, and the king loved him and made him his armor-bearer, and then refused to let him fight the enemy, afterwards consenting and putting armor on him, and then *after all this*, he wants to know "Who is he and where does he come from?"

Anyway, next to D'Artagnan, David is my idea of a real hero.

David got very friendly with Jonathan, Saul's son, and they became the best of pals and agreed to stand by one another through thick and thin. Saul made David a captain in the army, and everyone acclaimed him as a champion, which he certainly was. When they came back from the rout of the Philistines, the women came out to greet them and the victorious army, singing and danc-

ing, and they cried, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands."

This was far from soothing to Saul, who looked a little cooler on David thereupon, in fact, shortly after this, when David was in Saul's tent, he threw a spear at David, who dodged it, and got off safely for the time. They must have made it up however, because Saul then offered his daughter Michal, to David for wife.

He offered him the older girl, Merab, first, but David did not care for her and said it was too great an honor for him. He really loved Michal and she loved him, and when Saul found it out, he let them marry, after making a vain attempt to have David killed in an assault on the Philistines.

Then Saul, who seems to have been very blood-thirsty even for a savage king of that period, suggested to Jonathan and his servants that they should kill David, but Jonathan warned David of the danger, and told him to hide, and he would keep in touch with him and let him know how things went, for or against him. Then Jonathan spoke to his father, pointing out how innocent David was in everything, and what he had done for the country, so Saul promised to leave him alone. Jonathan then called David back.

Now began more wars with the Philistines, but the Israelites under David beat them badly, which increased Saul's jealousy of him and again he attempted to kill him, but David escaped to his own house, and from there to Samuel for protection.

Jonathan again expostulated with his father who, however pointed out to him that as long as David lived, his chances of succeeding as king were much limited, and Jonathan saw that there was no way of softening his father's anger against his friend; in fact, on arguing further with Saul, the latter threw a spear at him. Jonathan then left in anger and ran to warn David, who escaped to the city of Nob, to Ahimelech, the priest there.

Knowing that David was an important general, and seeing him come alone, the priest asked how he came so, and believing that Ahimelech would deliver him up to Saul, if he knew he was out of favor, David told him that he was on a commission of the king's, and that he was going to meet his retinue at such and such a place. Anyway, he went away from there and journeyed to several other cities, in none of which he found safety, until he arrived at Moab, and from Moab to the land of Judah, where he settled for a time.

But Saul sent for Ahimelech and accused him of protecting David and saving him, and when Ahimelech, who was really a good priest, stoutly defended himself, and spoke up bravely for David, and told Saul that David was a good and great man, he had him murdered, even although he was a priest; and several other priests and numbers of the inhabitants of the city of Nob.

Then the Philistines attacked the Israelites again, and David, enquiring of the Lord if he should go out against them, was told to do so. He went to the town of Kulah, which the Philistines were attacking, and drove them away with great slaughter and saved the town.

Chapter XIV

DEATH OF SAUL

Someone told Saul that David was in Kulah, and Saul sent an army to capture him; David knew that in spite of all he had done to save the town the people would deliver him up to Saul, so he escaped with his few followers, about six hundred soldiers in all. Saul looked for him everywhere, but could not find him, while David and his small force wandered in the desert.

Jonathan came to David and renewed his professions of friendship, and gave his word to stand by David at all times. Saul, however, cornered David and very nearly captured him, when he received the news that the obnoxious Philistines had again invaded the land and he had to forego the pursuit of David to defend the country.

After the fighting was over, he took three thousand men and again went to seek David. One night he camped in the valley (the Bible says cave) of En-gedi, where David was also, but he did not see the latter, who however saw him. David's men urged him to let them kill Saul, but he refused to let them raise their hands against the "Lord's anointed," but cut off part of his robe while he slept. The next morning, when Saul rose up and departed from the cave, David followed and called to him, shewed him the robe he had cut, (strange that Saul had not discovered it before) and told him that he had had the opportu-

nity of killing him, but refrained from doing so, and asked why Saul sought his life, he who had been true and faithful to him, and why should a great king like Saul pursue such an insignificant person like David.

Saul was greatly affected, and called him "his son David," and told him that he was the better of the two, and that he would be king when Saul was dead, and begged him not to cut off all his family after he died and when David became king, which David swore to, and they became reconciled and then both went their ways.

Then Samuel, who has been practically forgotten for a long time, died and was buried in Ramah, and the whole of the tribes mourned for him.

David lived in the wilderness and ran short of provisions. He sent to the town of Carmel, to a very rich landowner there, named Nabal, and pointing out that in war time neither he nor his men had looted any of Nabal's possessions, in fact, had even protected them, asked for a supply to help him out. Nabal refused, saying, "Who is this David, anyhow?"

David and his men set out to punish Nabal, when the latter's wife, Abigail, a very beautiful woman, heard of it. She loaded her asses with supplies of all description and hastened to intercept David, and doing so, made a long speech and presented them to him. It does not seem that she made any excuses for her husband, in fact she blamed him freely.

David accepted her speech and gifts, but rather blusteringly informed her that if she hadn't come along in time, it would have gone hard with her husband, Nabal. It seems, however, that he had been smitten with her charms and she with his. She returned home and found Nabal at a feast that he was giving, and at which he got very drunk, at which time his wife told him what she had done, and what he had luckily escaped from.

It gave him such a shock that he died from scare. And very soon after, David married Abigail. He also married a woman named Ahinoam, because Saul had taken his daughter, his first wife, away from him.

Shortly after this, Saul forgot his good intentions towards David, and he set out to capture him once more. One night, while he was sleeping with his sword and spear stuck in the ground near his pillow, David came along and captured the spear, and again when Saul awoke, reproached him as he had on the former occasion, and again Saul repented, and they made peace together and parted in amity.

However, David saw that sooner or later Saul would catch and kill him, when his spirit turned against him, so he decided to leave Israel and go and live with the Gathites, who were really enemies of the Jews, but with whom he was at peace for the moment. Remember, Goliath was a man of Gath, a Philistine.

He seems to have made a raid on some friendly neighbors of the Gathites and made a

dreadful slaughter, but he told the Gathites that he had been fighting the Israelites, which made them say, "Now he must fight for us, for he has made enemies of the people of Israel." The people of Gath evidently were a simple-minded people, or exceptionally stupid.

The Philistines prepared again to go out and have another encounter with the Israelites. Saul was thoroughly frightened at their host, and wished to get advice on what he should do. Samuel was dead, and anyway would have had nothing to do with him, and Saul himself had suppressed, with a very strong hand, all the professed witches and wizards, so that there was none left to foretell the result of this new war.

In those days the warriors always consulted the wizards and wise men before engaging in battles. Of course *they* always predicted victory, and if it all came out that way, the wizards were richly rewarded, but when the battles resulted in a defeat, the wise men usually paid a heavy toll for their errors.

Although all wizards had been suppressed, there was a woman, however, at a place called En-dor, who was known as a witch, but did not dare practice, on account of the restrictions against it. Saul was told of her, so disguising himself, he went to her and asked her to raise a certain spirit from the dead, one he would name to her.

The woman answered, "How can I? Do you not know it is above the law? You are setting a

trap for me," and refused to have anything to do with the matter.

But Saul swore that no harm should come to her and requested her to call up the spirit of Samuel, and when she went through the regular pretences of her pretended routine of exercising her powers, Samuel's spirit *did* actually appear (so the Bible informs us). The woman cried out in alarm at its appearance, as well she might, being no doubt as much surprised as Saul himself, and knew that it was the king at whose behest she had called the spirit.

The phantom reproached Saul for disturbing his rest, but Saul answered, "I am greatly distressed. The Philistines have come in much force, God has deserted me, he neither appears to me by his prophets or in dreams, and I have called on you to tell me what to do."

Samuel replied, "The Lord has departed from you and yours, because you have done wrong. Tomorrow you will be as dead as I am, and the Philistines will rout and defeat the Israelites. I can say no more." And the spirit of Samuel departed.

Next day, the Philistines attacked the Jews and defeated them with great slaughter. (It is impossible to avoid this troublesome repetition of this constant phrase, "defeat with great slaughter," because it occurs almost every few paragraphs in the history of Israelites). David did not fight with them, as he had trouble with some other of his enemies in the meantime, who had attacked his own people and captured his wives and all the

other women and young people; and some of the soldiers were so angry about it, that they spoke of stoning David.

So David followed his enemies, caught up and killed most of them and rescued the captives. He also took much booty and divided it equally among his six hundred men, although two hundred of them were so worn out and tired that they were not in at the finish of the fight, and the others, who were, objected.

David pointed out how unfair it would be not to share and share alike, and he insisted on a fair division; and he made that a rule, which has existed among the children of Israel ever since.

This little incursion of David's saved him from having to fight among the Philistines against his own people, even though his greatest personal enemy, Saul, was on the other side.

In the fighting between Saul and the Philistines, the former was defeated on all sides and thoroughly routed. Jonathan was killed and two other of Saul's sons, Abinadad and Melchi-Shua. Saul was badly wounded and begged his armor-bearer to kill him with his sword, so that he should not fall alive into the hands of the enemy.

The man refused, and Saul took the sword and killed himself, and when the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he killed himself also.

Then all the Israelites fled and the Philistines pursued them and captured all their towns, cities and strongholds, and among the dead they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons. They cut

off his head and sent word all over the land that Saul was dead, and that the Israelites were dispersed throughout the land. And so Saul, who, although very savage and ferocious by nature, was probably otherwise every inch a king, and was the first king that the Israelites ever knew, died.



Chapter XV

KING DAVID

To go back to David: when he returned from his little war to the city of Ziglag, where he made his headquarters, a man came to him from Saul's camp and told him that Saul and Jonathan were dead and the Israelites well beaten. David was grief-stricken, as much at the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, especially Jonathan, as at the defeat of his brethren.

He asked the man to tell him the details and the man, thinking to curry favor with him, and that David would rejoice at the death of Saul, who was well known to be his enemy, said that when Saul was sorely wounded, he had asked this man to kill him, and that he had done so.

David was cut to the heart at the news, and he and his army mourned deeply at the loss, and he instructed one of his soldiers to kill the messenger for laying his hand on the Lord's anointed.

He grieved excessively over the death of Jonathan, whom he called "his brother, Jonathan. How are the mighty fallen? Thy love for me was wonderful, passing the love of women. The beauty of Israel is slain. Tell it not in Gath, nor in the streets of Ascalon, lest our enemies rejoice. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives and in their deaths were undivided; they were swifter than eagles, stronger than lions."

David then went up to the cities of Judah, where Saul had reigned and which had been dangerous for him hitherto. And the people anointed him king of Judah. But Abner, Saul's general, took Saul's son, Ish-boseth, and made him king over the rest of Israel.

He was forty years of age at the time and reigned only two years. In the meantime only the house or tribe of Judah acknowledged David for king.

A little later, Joab, David's general, when out with a troop of soldiers, met Abner with *his* troop of men. They camped next to one another. Presently, as was natural, they came to blows and Joab defeated Abner thoroughly, and the latter fled rapidly, pursued by Joab's brother, Asahel, but who was killed by Abner, while following him.

Joab and another brother also pursued Abner, and had him cornered, till he begged a truce, which they gave him and let him go. Probably they did not know at that moment that he had killed Asahel. There is no other explanation for their clemency or forbearance. Altogether twenty of the men of Judah and three hundred of the Israelites were killed in this little fracas.

After that, there was frequent fighting and war between the houses of Judah and Israel, but David grew stronger and stronger, and the Israelites weaker and weaker.

David had a large family of children and several wives by this time.

Abner now had a quarrel with Ish-boseth, and sent word to David that he wished to join him. David said he was agreeable, provided he brought his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, to him as Saul had taken her away, and David really loved her. This was done and Abner and David made peace together.

Abner went away to arrange for David to be made king over all Israel, but later Joab, whose brother Abner had killed, met him and under pretense of friendship, took him on one side and stabbed him to death.

Everybody absolved David of any intent of wrong-doing or injury to Abner, and David was greatly distressed and sincerely sorry for this outrageous murder, and reproached Joab. He might have done better to have had him put to death for the crime, but the times were so savage and ferocious, that assassination of this nature was not looked upon as seriously as it would be today.

Just now, Ish-boseth was murdered by two of his servants, who then cut off his head and took it to David, thinking to please him thereby. David was so pleased, that he had the murderers put to death. Then all the tribes of Israel accepted David as king, and he was anointed as such.

The Bible says he was thirty years of age when he began to reign and he reigned forty years, but the Bible figures are very unreliable and untrustworthy, although these figures may be right.

David started off by capturing the city of

Zion, which is called the city of David to this day. He grew very rich and great, and other kings vied in seeking his good word and grace. That is, all of them, except the "pestilential" tribe of the Philistines, who gathered themselves together again to make further war on the Israelites. But David went after them and smashed them up.

Still they got together again and again, but he defeated them every time. Then the Jews brought the Ark of God to the City of David, amid great rejoicing and dancing, and it is said that Michal, the queen, saw David leaping and dancing before the Ark and laughed at him, and he rebuked her and was very angry with her.

At this time, by the mouth of a prophet, Nathan, God told David that he would have a son, who would succeed him and to whom the Lord would afford special protection, and to whom God would be as a Father. Even if he did wrong, God would punish but never desert him, as he did Saul. And this son should build a special Temple to God's honor, because David wished to build a house to the Lord, but the Lord forbade him.

David had several more wars on his hands with Moab, the Philistines, Zobah, Damascus, Edom and others, and was victorious everywhere, that all feared and revered him. At this time he discovered a son of Jonathan, named Mephibosheth, who was lame, so he sent for him and made much of him, for his father's sake, and made him welcome to his house.

Then David fell in love with the young and

beautiful wife of a man named Uriah, and he took her and she lived with him in secret, till there were signs of a child. She sent word to David to that effect. But of course, they had deceived her husband, who was entirely ignorant of the whole affair.

David now sent for Uriah, and under pretence of doing him great honor, gave him command of a troop to attack the enemy the next day. He secretly instructed Joab, his general, however, to desert Uriah when the foe pressed him in the thick of the fight, so that he should get killed, which actually happened. This was a very ignoble act on the part of any man, least of all a great king. In plain English, it was calculated cold-blooded murder.

Anyway it did not worry him and after Beth-sheba, the wife, had mourned for a few weeks, so as to give an air of decency to the proceedings, David married her and soon a baby was born, which, however, was sickly and died. The Bible says that Nathan, the prophet, was sent to David by God, and told him that this was the punishment for his crime. Nemesis does not usually follow so quickly in most cases, and probably other more natural causes were the reasons for the child's death.

Later on he had another son by Beth-sheba, whom he called Solomon, which was the child that the Lord had predicted and promised should build the Temple.

Then he had a fight with the people of Rab-

bah and defeated them and came back to Jerusalem.

Having had so many wives and so many children by them, it was natural that there should be some trouble and disquietude in the family circle at times. Two of his sons, Absalom and Amnon, quarrelled about Absalom's sister (no sister to Amnon) Tamar, who was treated badly by Amnon, who dishonored and then spurned her.

Absalom hid his hatred for some time, however, then one day at a feast he gave, he had Amnon murdered. Then he fled from his father's wrath and stayed away for three years, at the end of which time David forgave him. He really loved him more than Amnon, anyway.

His father's forgiveness does not seem to have made any great impression on Absalom, somehow, for he soon started a rebellion against David, who had to flee from Jerusalem and was in danger of starvation with his followers for some time. The only thing that saved David from destruction was the differences of opinion of what course to pursue in the revolt among the counsellors of Absalom. His chief adviser, Ahithophel, was so chagrined at having his advice flouted on one occasion, that he went home and hanged himself.

At last the two armies met, and David's, under the wily general, Joab, defeated the other with great slaughter and Absalom had to flee for his life.

One of his main characteristics was his long and beautiful hair, but this played him a very

nasty trick now, for in passing under a thicket, it became entangled in a great oak tree and he hung suspended in the air.

News of this was brought to Joab, and he followed and killed Absalom, in spite of distinct orders from David that no harm was to come to his traitorous son, but that he was to be made prisoner and carried to Jerusalem alive.

But a runner came to David with the news of the victory and Absalom's death, how he had been killed by Joab; and the king mourned and wept, crying, "Oh, Absalom, my son, my son, Absalom, would to God that I had died for thee, Absalom my son."

Joab came along and reproached David, telling him that he was shaming the soldiers and the people in mourning so for Absalom, who was his enemy, and that it was clear that David would have been more pleased if Absalom had lived, and all the king's soldiers had been killed that day. There was some little argument in Joab's reproaches, brutal as they were.

David therefore ceased his mourning, but did not forget Joab's revilings, you may be sure, as we shall find out later. He resumed his kingly duties, one of which was to reconcile the people of Judah with the followers of Absalom, who now returned to their allegiance, but it seems that he managed to patch up matters with them and they lived fairly amicably together.

But another rebellion broke out this time led by a man named Sheba, of the tribe of Benjamin;

Joab made very short work of this one by catching Sheba and cutting off his head. Joab was thorough in all his doings. On this occasion, he was accompanied by Amasa, who had been Absalom's captain, but who had been taken into favor by David again and restored to his former rank.

Joab hated him, for probably personal and state reasons, so he stabbed him under the pretense of greeting him in friendship one day.

Then came a three-years' famine in the country. David enquired of the Lord the reason for this, and the Lord is said to have replied: "It is all on account of Saul's bad deeds, because he killed some Gibeonites."

You may remember that a long time ago, before Saul was born, in fact before his father or his grandfather and perhaps *his* father, was born, Joshua was tricked into making a peace with these very Gibeonites, who at that time pretended to be a different people from what they were. This is what the Bible refers to here, and tells us that because Saul, who no doubt knew nothing of the story, and little enough of Joshua, had killed some of the descendants of this tricky race during his wars, in which no doubt, they fought against him, God now sent a famine into the land.

Remember these Gibeonites were no angels, being a branch of the Philistines and Canaanites.

Anyway when David heard this, or when he pretended to hear it, which is more likely the case, as perhaps he was a little anxious to clear out the

family of Saul, in spite of the fact that he had sworn to Saul to spare his family, he sent for the Gibeonites, and told them all about it, and asked them how he could atone for the very atrocious and heinous crime of Saul, so as to avert the famine.

The Gibeonites were very modest; all they asked was that the seven children (sons, grandsons, they weren't particular) of the house of Saul, be given to them, so that *they could hang them*. To which David agreed.

What a picture for a painter. On the one hand a pious looking hypocritical king, grieved and sad at having such an unhappy affair occur among such a good, religious, God-fearing people as the Israelites were, and on the other side, the crafty, evil Gibeonites, ferocious in their taste for vengeance on their hated enemy, half-doubting the sincerity of the offer and sneering up their sleeves, and the miserable prisoners in the background.

David gave them the two grandsons of Saul by one daughter, and five sons of Michel, Saul's other daughter, who had been David's own wife, but had had another husband, whose sons these were. There was possibly some venom and personal feeling in David's selection of these victims. And they were hung by the Gibeonites. Then the famine stopped. A lovely, wonderful story to insert in a Holy Bible.

Chapter XVI

DEATH OF DAVID

Then followed a number of wars with the Philistines, each of which the Israelites won; in these wars were three or four brothers of the giant Goliath, whom David had killed early in his history, who were also giants and who were killed now. It is something wonderful to conjecture where all these Philistines came from. No matter how many were slaughtered, the next week they were around as lively as ever, and came up for another defeat.

But the Israelites decided that hereafter, David should not go into battle as they did not want to take the chance of having him killed as he was very daring and venturesome, and in the thick of a fight anything was likely to happen.

David now ordered Joab to take a census of the people, which was a crime, as God had forbidden it, why, is not very apparent. Joab expostulated with David, who was obstinate and instructed him to go ahead, which he did with much misgiving. It took nearly a year to do it, and they found that in the tribe of Judah, from which David was descended, there were five hundred thousand fighting men, and in the rest of the tribes of Israel there were eight hundred thousand of them. The proportions do not seem right, but that is what it says in the Bible.

Evidently the rest of the people, the old men, women and children did not count, as no mention is made of them.

Then Gad, a new prophet, came to David in the name of God, and said he was to be punished for the sin of numbering the people, and gave him the choice of three punishments: seven years of famine, three months of pursuit by his enemies, or three days of pestilence.

David left it all to God (they blamed everything on God those days) so the Lord sent the pestilence and *seventy thousand* people died. No doubt the pestilence would have come and was due, whether David had counted the people or not.

David was now very old, and like all old people, suffered much, felt the changes in temperature, rain, heat and cold more than persons younger normally do. Anyway, he married another wife, a young girl named Abishag, but still he failed in health.

Then another of his sons, Adonijah, who was a brother to Absalom, set himself up for king, thinking his father was helpless and very near death, and even induced Joab to follow him; also Abiathar, one of the priests, and several other notables. The real responsible leaders kept aloof.

Nathan, the prophet, came to Bath-sheba, the mother of Solomon, in great heat and told her that Adonijah was now ruling, and that David was not aware of it, and advised her to go at once to the king and make him announce that Solomon

was to succeed him. Nathan promised that he would follow her into the presence of David and add his supplications to hers.

She did so and David immediately sent for all the priests (the Bible is awfully confusing here; first they were speaking to David, then they came in, then he sent for them, while all the time none of them had gone out) and made them promise to proclaim Solomon king at once. This they did and blew the trumpets and anointed him with oil and cried, "God save King Solomon," and all the people rejoiced and were pleased with the selection, for Solomon was rather popular.

Adonijah was dining with his suite when the news spread that Solomon was proclaimed king, and he heard the commotion in the city. When he received the information that David had sanctioned the selection, he fled to the Ark for safety and sent word to Solomon, asking him to spare him.

Solomon sent him word to go home and behave himself and he would come to no harm, but if he caused any further mischief— — —

David sent for Solomon and gave him his last injunctions. He told him to be a good Jew, and to walk in the way of God, keep his laws and commandments, and the Lord would be with him, and he would multiply and become great. Then he told him how false Joab had been to him and to all people, how he had murdered Abner, Amasa and Absalom and advised him to have him put to death.

He also instructed him to have put to death a man named Shimei, who had at one time insulted David, but whom he had forgiven then and had promised not to punish. David was fairly vindictive and deep, and by passing the punishments of these persons to Solomon, took a very Jesuitical method of getting vengeance for his wrongs by not breaking the words of his promises, while absolutely forgoing the entire spirit of the word.

He told Solomon however, to take particular care of the Gileadites and to do honor to them as they had befriended him in his necessity, when he had fled from Absalom at the time of that rebellion.

Then David died at the age of seventy, having reigned forty years. He was the only man of eminence in the Bible, Old Testament, that shewed all the good and bad characteristics of a great man.

Besides being a great ruler and warrior, David was a poet. He wrote the Psalms, which are blank verse, chapters of praise and adoration to God. They are considered very beautiful and are used daily in our modern religious services.

There is however, much repetition in them, in fact, they are one repetition after another, and some of them have too much self-vaunting in them to be strictly beautiful. Especially when David was in trouble is this evident, just as when he fled from his son Absalom.

There are about one hundred and fifty of the

Psalms altogether, but could be much improved by reduction to a quarter of that number.

The first thing that happened now that Solomon was acknowledged by everyone as king, was that his brother, Adonijah came forward and asked for David's last wife, Abishag, to be *his* wife. That settled him for good, but he deserved it for being such an ass.

Solomon saw that he intended to be a troublemaker, so he had him killed for his presumption.

Then Solomon banished the priest, Abiathar, who had deserted David to follow Adonijah. As he was a priest, he did not wish to kill him. But he had Joab put to death, although he fled to the horns of the Tabernacle for protection. Then Solomon made Benaiah, general of his army, and Zadok, High Priest.

A little later he had Shimei killed. After that he settled down to reign in peace, and prospered and married the daughter of the then Pharaoh of Egypt. And he worshipped the Lord and followed in his footsteps, though the two propositions do not seem to agree, somehow, that is, the marrying the Egyptian and the following in the footsteps.

Soon after this, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said, "Ask what you will and I will give you, riches, success, family or otherwise."

Solomon replied, "Oh Lord, I feel so helpless, coming after so great a king as David my father, governing such a large unruly people. Grant me

wisdom, I pray you, that I may know right from wrong in my judgment."

God was so pleased at the request that he answered, "Because thou hast not asked for riches nor for personal aggrandizement, I will give you not only the wisdom that you ask, but riches, greatness and long life. Only keep my statutes and commandments."

This at least was the story disseminated among the Israelites by Solomon and his satellites, and it greatly increased his fame. Then an event occurred that proved his good sense in a very perplexing situation and which caused much approbation.

Two women came to him with a complaint, at least, one complained of the other. Each had had a child born, of which one died in the night from the mother's neglect, and the one woman complained that this child's mother had substituted the dead baby for the living one while she slept.

The other woman denied this, and they both vehemently asserted their claim to the living child. There were no witnesses and nothing to identify either of the children, so that it was purely a question of veracity. Solomon thought deeply and then rendered the following judgment:

"There is only one way to satisfactorily settle this case. No one can say who is or is not telling the truth. Bring me a sword and I will cut the living child in two, and give half to each mother."

Then the one said, "That is right, O king," but the other was horrified, and said, "No, Oh Lord, injure not the child, but give it to her."

"There speaketh the mother," said Solomon, "give her the baby and send the other woman away." And all around praised the king, who by his sound judgment and common sense had solved a very trying case, and they knew that God's spirit was in him.

Chapter XVII

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE

Solomon thereafter grew very great and famous, and all Judah and Israel flourished and had peace all the days of his reign. He was wiser than any man of his time, and his fame spread among all other nations. He was also a wonderful poet and composed over a thousand songs and three thousand proverbs, some of which appear further on. Probably many were attributed to him that he never wrote.

People came from all parts of the other lands to listen to his wisdom and to learn wisdom at his feet. The Queen of Sheba came with many perplexing problems and hard questions, and he answered them all correctly like the oracle that he was reported, and she brought him presents of priceless value, gems, gold and silver, and wonderful spices.

Hiram, King of Tyre, sent ambassadors and servants to him when he heard of his fame. This Hiram had been a great friend of David.

Solomon set out early in his reign to build a great house or Temple, to God, to worship in and to rest the Ark in. It was a most wonderful work of masonry and the Bible goes into considerable detail of what it was built of, and how it was constructed, but anyway, it must have been a very marvelous work of genius. It took seven years

to build and thousands of men were employed on its erection.

The Bible says he began to build it in the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites left Egypt, but so many events had happened in the meantime, that these figures are probably guess-work, and in no way even approximately correct. It would seem to have been much longer than that.

Stone hewed in the quarries, cedar and fir trees for wood were used principally in the building, and there was much elegant carving and fine gold work on the floor, walls and ceiling. Wood of the olive tree was also used generously.

Solomon also built his own palace, another gorgeous structure, but it took thirteen years to finish this and then he built a house for his wife, Pharaoh's daughter.

When all was done, the Ark of God was brought to the Temple and the building was consecrated amid great rejoicing and jollification, and Solomon blessed the people in the name of the Lord.

After this, with the help of Hiram, King of Tyre, he built a navy, a fleet of ships on the Red Sea, which is the first intimation of a ship in the Bible, excepting the Ark of Noah. Usually when the Israelites wanted to cross the water, you will have noticed, the waters stood up on one side for them in a very courteous and obliging manner.

But, sad to relate, after all this, Solomon went wrong, and loved and married many women who

were forbidden to the Hebrews; women of Moab, Ammon, Edom, Zidon, and Hittites. Elsewhere in the Bible, these nations are stated to have been utterly wiped out tooth and nail, but these contradictions show how loosely the whole Bible was translated and woven together.

Altogether Solomon had *seven hundred* wives and *three hundred* concubines, that is women whom he treated as wives, but without the status of same, and to whom he was not married.

Of course with so many women, all worshipping different gods and believing so many different kinds of religions, it was natural that the infatuated king should be led from the right path into evil ways, which, in spite of the wisdom with which he was credited, he was.

And God threatened Solomon that as he had departed from the true way, as a punishment, He would divide his kingdom, but not take it away from his entirely, because He had so promised his father, David.

God raised up an enemy to Solomon, one Hadad, who came of royal blood, and several others, who troubled him all the days of his reign; among these was Jereboam, also an Israelite of Ephraim. The reason he rose against the king was because the latter sought to kill him, it having been predicted that when Solomon died, Jeroboam would be king of all the Israelites, except the tribe of Judah, which should remain faithful to Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

There was nothing more of any moment in

Solomon's life. He reigned forty years, and died and was buried in Zion, or Jerusalem. He left a wonderful reputation for intelligence and wisdom, but with a rather weak foundation for same.

He wrote several hundreds of songs, it is claimed, also the Book of Proverbs. There are thirty-four chapters of them, and many are in daily use to this very time. He repeats himself again and again in them, and seems to be most particular in advising his fellow man to be careful in his dealings with women. Some of the better known proverbs, or those more worthy of remembrance, are as follows:

A wise man will hear and increase learning.
Fools despise wisdom and learning.

Surely in vain the net is spread in sight of the
bird.

Be not wise in thine own eyes.

Whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth.

Say not to thy neighbor, Come tomorrow,
when thou hast it today.

The wise shall be glorified, shame shall be the
lot of the fools.

Go to the ant, thou sluggard, who having no
leader, finds its own meat in the summer,
and gathereth its food in the harvest.

These things are hateful: a proud look, a lying
tongue, a hand stained with murder, an
evil heart, a perjurer, a mischief maker,
and one who sows discord.

Keep from evil women; can a man take fire
to his bosom and his clothes not get

burned? Can one go on hot coals and not
burn his feet?
Forsake the foolish and prosper.
He that gathereth in summer is wise.
The memory of the just is blessed; that of the
wicked will rot.
Love covers all sins.
A hypocrite destroys his neighbors with his
mouth.
A talebearer reveals secrets; a faithful friend
conceals them.
In the counsel of the multitude is safety.
The way of a fool is right in his own way.
A fool's shame is known everywhere; a pru-
dent man's nowhere.
A wise son listens to his father's counsel.
Hope deferred makes the heart sick.
The way of the transgressor is hard.
Spare the rod and spoil the child.
He chastens his son, when the rod is due.
Go from the presence of a foolish man.
The heart knoweth its own bitterness.
Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and
the end of mirth is heaviness.
The poor is hated by his own neighbors; but
the rich man has many friends.
He that is slow to anger is of great under-
standing.
A soft answer turneth away wrath.
A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.
Sorrow of the heart breaks the spirit.

Rather a dinner of herbs where love is, than
the finest feast where hatred abides.

Better a little with right, than great riches
without right.

Better to get wisdom than gold.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty
spirit before a fall.

A merry heart does more than medicine.

A foolish son is a grief and bitterness to a
mother and father.

Even a fool with closed mouth is held wise.

He that lends to the poor, lends to the Lord.

Who can say, I am pure from sin?

Bear no company with flatterers.

The glory of young men is their strength, that
of the old, their gray hairs.

Better to dwell in a corner in an attic, than
in the parlor with a brawling woman.

Whoso holdeth his tongue and keeps his
mouth shut, keeps out of trouble.

A good name is better than riches.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and
when he grows up he will not depart
from it.

Make no friendship with bad tempered men.

Look not upon the wine, when it is red.

If thou fail in the day of trial, thy strength is
small.

Settle your affairs with your neighbor personally; do not drag outsiders into a matter between you two.

If thy enemy be hungry and thirsty, give him food and drink, thus casting coals of fire on his head.

Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou be foolish.

Who digs a pit for his enemy shall fall in himself.

Boast not today of tomorrow; thou knowest not what the day may bring.

Let others praise you not thine own lips.

The kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

The wicked flee when no man pursueth (conscience makes cowards of us all).

If a wise man argue with a fool, it brings no result.

A fool uttereth his whole mind, but a wise man says little.

There is more hope for a fool than for a man who speaks hastily.

A man's pride shall bring him to the ground.

The humble shall be honored in spirit.

Four things are not understandable: The eagle's flight, the way of a serpent, the way of a ship at sea, and the way of a man with a maid.

The worth of a virtuous woman is far above rubies.

A study of these Proverbs, whether Solomon wrote them or didn't, is almost a daily need for the present time.

Chapter XVIII

THE KINGDOMS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

After Solomon's death the kingdom was divided, the tribe of Judah clave to his son, Rehoboam, and the rest of the tribes to Jereboam. The two kingdoms were hereinafter designated the kingdoms of Judah and Israel respectively. The history of these kings and their pretty empires are so tiresome that we will get through them as quickly as we can. This refers to Rehoboam, Jereboam and all their descendants, till the end of the two kingdoms.

Rehoboam had a chance to hold the two kingdoms together, or rather, a chance to save them from separating, at the death of Solomon, when he was first elected king. Jereboam, in the name of the people, presented him with a list of their grievances, which he claimed Solomon had imposed on the nation, and asked Rehoboam to adjust and lighten them. Rehoboam promised to answer after giving them due consideration.

He consulted the wise old men of the kingdom, who advised him to give in to the people, and that then he would be able to rule them and they would be his servants. But he was not satisfied with this advice and took counsel with the younger, light-headed, more frivolous of his personal friends and courtiers.

They told him to advise the people that unless they did not subject themselves to his rule at the first, without any conditions, he would be harder than his father. He took their advice and spoke brusquely to Jereboam when he came for the answer to the people's request, saying further, "My father did load you with a yoke; I will add to the yoke: my father lashed you with whips, I will lash you with scorpions."

He then sent a man named Adoram to oppress the Israelites, but they stoned him to death. This started things.

Jereboam probably got the answer he had hoped for and wanted. Perhaps he couched his requests in such a way that admitted no other reply. Anyway, Rehoboam ran away to his chief city of Jerusalem and the Israelites made Jereboam their king and repudiated Rehoboam, who made ready to attack them.

The Bible says that word came to him, however, not to do it, so he disbanded his army and went no further. In all probability, he saw he was outnumbered and outmatched and decided to leave well enough alone.

Jereboam however, had a problem before him. The Ark of God, before which the people were wont to sacrifice, was in Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, and if the Israelites went there to worship there was the chance that they might be led to turn against him, kill him, and return to Rehoboam.

He therefore made two calves of gold, and put them, one at each extremity of the land of Israel, then said to the people, "It is too much for you to go to Jerusalem. Here are thy gods." He then appointed priests that were not of the house of Levi, which all priests had to be, and of course these priests stood up for him, and performed the duties of priests before the nation.

Then a priest came from Judah to Jereboam in the name of God and threatened in His name, but it made no difference to this king, except for the moment; then he became worse than before, elevating the lowest of the people to the priesthood, as the whim suited him.

Shortly after this, his son fell sick. Jereboam sent his wife, disguised, to the very prophet, Ahijah, who had predicted that he would be king in previous days. ,

Ahijah was old and blind, but he had been advised of the coming of the disguised female, therefore when she appeared at his house, he taxed her immediately as the wife of Jereboam, and told her that he had bad news for her, that the child would die, and because her husband had become so thoroughly wicked, evil would come to his house, and his family would be wiped out.

The woman went home and when she reached her door, the child died.

In spite of the prophet's threats however, it seems that Jereboam reigned twenty-two years, and after him, his son, Nadab, reigned.

Meantime Rehoboam reigned in Jerusalem. He was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and was king for seventeen years. He and the children of Judah were just as bad as the Israelites, worshipping idols and departing from the word of God.

During his reign, Shishak, king of Egypt, made war on Judah and defeated the Judahites, and carried away all the treasures of the Temple. Rehoboam also had war with Jereboam all his lifetime. When he died, his son, Abijah became king.

Abijah reigned three years and we know very little of him, except that he was also very bad. He also fought Jereboam and inflicted on him a great defeat. He had fourteen wives, twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters. When he died his son Asa, became king. Jereboam was still king of Israel at this time, in the twentieth year of his reign.

Asa reigned for forty-one years and was a very good, religious king, and followed in the way of the Lord. He was so good, that he removed his mother as queen, because she worshipped an idol, which he destroyed. He had a lot of trouble with a king of Israel, of whom we shall speak presently, whose name was Baasha.

In fact, Asa was so beset, that he had to send for assistance to the king of Syria, who sent an army to help him. Between them they drove off Baasha. Asa suffered from a disease in his feet,

probably rheumatism or gout, but lived to a good age. Jehoshaphat, his son, succeeded him.

To go back to the land of Israel. Nadab, the son of Jereboam, became king after his father's death, and reigned two years, and was a bad lot altogether. He was killed by Baasha at the time Asa had been on the throne of Judah three years, and Baasha made himself king in his stead. He had no claim to the throne, save that "might is right."

He started by killing all the descendants and relations of Jereboam, which was probably very good policy on his part, although altogether indefensible, being nothing but cold blooded murder. He did not leave a single branch of the family living.

He was also a very bad and dissolute monarch in every way, yet reigned twenty-four years. He reminds one of the bad little boy of Mark Twain's story.

Barring what has already been told of him, nothing more is known, good or bad. His son, Elah, became king after him. Asa was still king of Judah when Baasha died.

Elah reigned two years, when he was murdered by Zimri, one of his officers, who became king then.

Zimri's first act was to destroy all of the house of Baasha. He had to be quick about it, however, for it seems that he only reigned seven days, because the nation rebelled against him for killing Elah, and made Omri king; Omri being

another officer, more popular with the people.

Omri gathered the army together and besieged Zimri in the capital city, Tirzah, which he captured. Zimri, seeing all was lost, went to the palace, set fire to it, and perished in the flames.

After this there was a division of the people of Israel; half followed Omri and the others Tibni, and wanted him for king. Tibni was the son of Ginath, which tells us nothing about him, or what claim he had to the throne. Omri and Tibni fought, and the latter got the worst of it, being killed, so Omri reigned. Asa was still king of Judah at the time.

One of the first of Omri's acts was to buy the hill of Samaria and build a city there of the same name. He was a very wicked king indeed, just as bad as his predecessors, or if anything, worse.

He reigned twelve years, died and was buried in Samaria, and his son, Ahab, became king, Asa still being king in Judah.

When we come to Ahab, we come to real refinement of wickedness; he was the worst of the lot so far, and he had a wife to match. Her name was Jezebel, and she was the daughter of the king of the Zidonians, who worshipped the idol Baal in Samaria. She hated the other religions so, that she slaughtered several prophets of the Israelites, who worshipped God.

The Bible has been very scanty with miracles for some time, but now the word of the Lord came to Elijah, a prophet, telling him that there would be no rain or dew for three years on ac-

count of the wickedness of the Israelites and their king, and that everything would dry up, and there would be starvation and rot all over the land. Elijah was told however, to go to a certain brook, where ravens would bring him food daily.

This continued for some time, then the brook dried up but Elijah performed several miracles and had food when nobody else had. Then he began to work many miracles all over the place. He brought a supposedly dead boy to life, by breathing on him, but of course the Bible says he asked God to restore the child to life, which was done.

After three years, he went at God's behest to Ahab, who feared him greatly, having heard of the wonderful miracles, and by threats and cajolery, he induced the Israelites to throw down the alters of Baal, which were in use everywhere, and kill the false prophets of Baal, which in the state of mind and famine the people were, they were easily persuaded to do.

So they killed all the Baalite priests and prayed to God to forgive them. Rain came shortly afterwards, and the famine passed, as it would have done anyway in the ordinary course of things, but no doubt, Elijah took a lot of credit for it.

Jezebel was so furious at the slaughter of the priests that she sent to kill Elijah, who fled for his life and finally got safely to Damascus. Here he met Jehu, who was a soldier, a captain, and conspired with him to make him king in the place of

Ahab. It was pretty tough work in those days to fight the wily old prophets. Elijah also met and appointed Elisha his own successor.

Then the king of Syria came down to attack Samaria and he had a number of little kings with him, thirty-two in all. You can imagine the extents of their various kingdoms. This Syrian king, Ben-hadad by name, sent word to Ahab to come out and surrender, and Ahab, who however, does not seem to have been a coward, refused and told him to come and get him. Ben-hadad prepared to attack the city the next day.

Anyway, the Israelites won the battle that ensued, and the Syrians fled after being nearly cut to pieces. They came the next year again stronger than ever. The reason the Bible gives for the Israelites winning, bad as they were, is that the Syrians were even worse than they were. The children of Israel slew **One Hundred Thousand** of the enemy in a pitched battle, and in fleeing, a wall fell on the others and killed **Twenty-Seven Thousand more**.

Ben-hadad was taken prisoner, but asked for mercy and Ahab spared his life, but a prophet of God came to him and told him in a long round-about way, that God was very angry with him in consequence, and for doing so would take Ahab's life for Ben-hadad's, and the lives of the Israelites for the lives of the Syrians. That made the king go home very displeased.

Chapter XIX

KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

You would not think, that wicked as he was and utterly false to the Lord, that God would have troubled so much with a reprobate of Ahab's character. Here is another specimen of his wickedness.

Near his palace was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. Naboth was a rich man and valued the land as a piece of ground that had been in his family for many years.

Ahab wanted this vineyard, especially as it was situated so near to his own land, and offered money to Naboth for it, or suggested a change in some property. Naboth refused to part with it for reasons of sentiment and other reasons, and would not entertain any propositions on the matter. Ahab took the refusal to heart, and grew sick with aggravation.

Jezebel noticed his moody looks and wormed the secret of his trouble out of him and told him not to worry; she would arrange matters for him. She employed two men to perjure themselves and accuse Naboth of blaspheming God and the king, which they did, and he was convicted on their evidence and stoned to death, which was the punishment for such a crime at the time.

Ahab set out joyfully to take possession of the vineyard, but Elijah met him in they way.

Ahab greeted him as follows: "Hast thou found me, oh my enemy?" Elijah answered him, "I have found you committing evil in the sight of the Lord." Then he went on to tell him that God had absolutely departed from him and that he and his posterity should be cut off forever, that he would die a violent death and so should Jezebel, and that the dogs should lap up her blood.

At this Ahab rent his clothes and mourned, and the Bible says that God sent word that this should not happen while he lived, that is the death of Jezebel, but because he had humbled himself, it should happen in his son's time. There is no harm in believing that God said this.

Jehoshaphat was now king of Judah and came to visit Ahab, who asked him to join him in an attack on Syria, to which the king of Judah agreed. Ahab called the prophets of Israel together (there were four hundred of them) and asked them if he should go out and fight the Syrians; and they all said, "Go ahead and win victory."

However Jehosahphat asked if there were not another prophet, one a little more respectable, and Ahah answered, "Yes, there is Micaiah, but I don't like him, he is always preaching against me."

They sent for him just the same, and asked his advice, which at first he gave in mockery and derided them, telling them to go out and win; then finally he said that all Ahab's prophets were lying, and if Ahab went, he would not come back.

Ahab became frightfully angry with Micaiah

and told his people to imprison him and feed him on bread and water till he returned and could decide on his punishment. Then Ahab and Jehosaphat went out to the battle. Ahab disguised himself as a common soldier, but Jehosaphat went dressed as a warrior and king.

The enemy leaders had given instructions to their men to particularly select Ahab for their target in the fighting and try and kill him, and when they saw Jehosaphat, who was the only officer who looked anything like a monarch, they went for him, but he called out who he was and they left him, alone. Ahab was killed however, by an arrow shot at a venture, and his armies fled and the dogs licked up his blood.

He was buried in Samaria and his son, Ahaziah, became king.

Jehosaphat reigned in Judah for twenty-five years and died at the age of sixty. He was a very good king, and grew rich and prosperous, but he had no right to make a treaty with Ahab of Israel, as he did. In his reign he selected good and upright judges, who served the nation with justice. After he died, his son, Jehoram became king of Judah.

Ahaziah became king of Israel in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat's reign, but only reigned two years. He was a bad ruler, followed in the steps of his father and mother and worshipped Baal, the idol, and was wicked in every conceivable way.

He had a fight with Moab and then fell sick

and died. He left no children so his brother Joram or Jehoram, nothing to do with the king of Judah of the same name, became king.

At this time Elijah, of whom we have not heard much lately, disappeared from the earth. The Bible devotes a whole chapter to this adventure, from which it appears that there was considerable talk among the prophets of the whole affair. Elisha, his apostle, was travelling with him and they came to the River Jordan, which as usual, opened up for them to pass over, when suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared, and Elijah got in and went right up to heaven in a whirlwind.

The story made a great sensation at the time, no doubt, and consolidated the power the priests already had over the imagination of the people, especially the rabble and the ignorant. Even a yellow journal of today could not get up a greater "beat."

Elisha now became prophet-in-chief. His first act, according to the Bible, was to set a couple of bears on to some innocent children, who made fun of his bald pate, and forty-two of them were killed. After that he went home, and no doubt, ate his supper with much satisfaction.

Joram was king of Israel for twelve years and was bad, but not quite so bad as his father and mother. Probably he did the best he could, though. The king of Moab, who had been paying tribute to Israel for years, now rebelled, and said he would pay no longer, so Joram sent to Jehosa-

phat of Jerusalem, asking him to come and join him in an onslaught on Moab.

Jehosaphat came and after a lot of juggling with the prophets, they went out and slaughtered the Moabites and licked them badly.

All this time Elisha was traveling about the country and performing every kind of miracle conceivable, such as bringing the dead to life, making poisoned food harmless, when there was a famine, and other kind of stunts. Of course as these prophets were men of considerable study and understood botany and medicine, and other sciences of which the general public knew nothing, a lot of ordinary results of the ordinary workings of these men were taken as miracles, about which the prophets took care not to undeceive the masses.

One of the miracles he performed was this. Naaman, the general of the Syrians, was a leper, and he heard of Elisha's powers and marvelous cures, so he thought he would go to Elisha and see what he could do for him. But when he came to the prophet's house, Elisha sent down word, "Go and wash seven times in the River Jordan and you will become clean."

Naaman became boiling mad, probably thought it was a reflection on his hygienic habits, which might well have been the case, although Elisha did not mean it that way, and said, "Why wash in such a miserable stream as the Jordan? Are not the Syrian rivers, Abana and Pharpar of

Damascus better than all the rivers of Israel?" And he went home without trying the cure.

He was persuaded by his servants, however, to try it out and against his own inclination he did so, and lo and behold, after washing seven times, he became as clean of leprosy as can be. He offered Elisha many rewards, which were refused, and left with much gratitude, after saying that there was no God but the God of Israel.

Elisha's servant thought it was a pity that Naaman got away so cheaply, so he ran after him and in the name of Elisha begged a reward, which Naaman gave most liberally. Elisha found it out by his usual magic, and as a punishment, wished Naaman's leprosy on his servant, which, so says the Bible, came to pass.

The whole story can be nothing but a fable, meant to point a moral, if the reader can find one.

Chapter XX

KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL

(Continued)

Shortly after this, just when the Bible tells us that Elisha had performed many more miracles, Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, attacked Israel and besieged Samaria the capital. There was great starvation in Samaria in consequence, and it is even said that the people ate their children in their desperation.

The king sent for Elisha when there appeared no sign of the enemy going away and asked him what was to be done, and what was to be the end of it all, and Elisha replied that within twenty-four hours there would be no more famine, and that food would be plentiful and as cheap as before.

One of the great lords present at the time of this prediction sneered, and Elisha told him that he should see the abundance but not partake of it.

It seems that there were four lepers outside the city, who were not allowed in, on account of possible contagion, and these were just as hungry as those inside the capital. So one said to the other, "What is the use? If we stay here, we die of starvation, and if we go to the Syrians we shall get killed. At least the Syrians have food, and

perhaps we may get a chance to get a bite before they kill us. Let us go to their camp.” ,

They set off for the Syrian camp, but when they arrived there, the Syrians were all gone, had fled in disorder, having been falsely alarmed at an attack on the part of the Israelites. They fled in such haste, probably having been informed that the vanguard of the Hebrews was close at hand, their sentries having taken the four lepers for the advance guard, that they left everything behind untouched.

The lepers went from tent to tent, eating, drinking and looting. Then they decided to go back and tell the Israelites in Samaria and when *they* heard it, they stampeded for the Syrian camp, and in the frenzied rush that ensued, the great lord who had sneered at Elisha, was knocked down and trampled to death, within sight of plenty.

Another miracle of Elisha's was when Ben-hadad fell sick and sent an officer to him to ask if he would get better; Elisha sent word that he would not, but the officer, one Hazael, went back and told the king that Elisha said he would, but evidently not wishing to make a liar of the prophet, he smothered the king the next day, and became king of Syria in his place.

In the meantime Jehoshaphat of Jerusalem died and his son, Jehoram, became king, as mentioned a little earlier. He was king for eight years and married Ahab's daughter and was very wicked, indeed. In his reign, Edom, which was

under the sway of Judah, broke away and became a separate kingdom.

Jehoram fought with Edom and defeated it, but could not conquer its people. He also had several fights with Libneh. These names mean nothing, and were probably small unimportant wandering tribes who sprang up again and again.

Our old friends, the Philistines came to life in his reign and he had quite a war with them, in which they beat him and captured most of his family. He died of a terrible sickness of the bowels, and his youngest son, Ahaziah, reigned. Do not confuse him with the other king of Israel of the same name, about whom we have told, not that it matters very much, for neither were of the slightest consequence to this history.

This Ahaziah only reigned one year. He formed a league with Joram, or Jehoram of Israel to fight Hazael of Syria, and in the battle that followed, Joram was wounded and went back to the town of Jezreel to get better.

Just at this time, Jehu the former officer to whom, Elijah had spoken in an earlier chapter and of whom we have heard nothing since, was egged on by Elisha to rebel against Jehoram. First of all, he started out to attack Jezreel. He was met outside the city by Jehoram and Ahaziah and killed them both. Then he drove to the city to the palace, killed Jezebel, who mocked him and threw her body out of the window.

Later in the day he gave orders to have her buried because, anyway, he said she was the

daughter of a king; but when his servants came to get her body, there were nothing but a few bones, for the dogs of the city had eaten her up.

Then Jehu started out and slaughtered all the house of Ahab, including *seventy* of his sons, and all of the house of Ahaziah, and all the priests of Baal, and he broke down the altars and the images of Baal. Then he had much war with the Syrians. He reigned twenty-eight years in all, and his son Jehoahaz, followed him. Jehu was famous for his fast and furious driving. Even this day we speak of a driver of any kind, but especially a speedy one, as a Jehu.

In the meantime, Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, reigned in Judah. Then they killed her, and made a son of Ahaziah king. His name was Joash, and he had escaped the vengeance of Jehu by the connivance of his sister, Jehosheban.

Joash was only seven years old at the time. He must have been a tiny baby when his father died. He reigned forty years. Jehoida was High Priest at the time, and a very good friend of the king.

He was a good king and followed the Lord under the guidance of his mentor, Jehoida. He had the Temple, which had fallen into very bad condition, repaired and gave much attention to good and honest matters, destroyed the idols of Baal, and its priests.

When Jehoida died, he went wrong and worshipped idols, but still was not really a bad king and was just in all dealings.

In spite of his goodness, just the same, Hazael, king of Syria, attacked and laid tribute on him, and his servants formed a conspiracy against him and murdered him, and his son Amaziah, became king.

To return to Israel, so as to keep some sort of chronology with the two kingdoms, Jehoahaz, who was king after his father, Jehu, was as bad as any of the preceding rulers. He reigned seventeen years and had trouble seriously all the time with the Syrians, who defeated the Israelites badly and oppressed them.

Ultimately the Israelites repented of their wickedness and the Bible tells us that God delivered them out of the hands of the Syrians.

Nothing more is known of Jehoahaz, who died and was buried in Samaria and his son Joash, or Jehoash, succeeded him, and reigned sixteen years.

He was a bad lot also, and led the people into all sorts of trouble, even to fighting with Amaziah, king of Judah. Little is known of him further than this anyway, and when he died and was buried in Samaria, his son Jereboam became king.

Meanwhile in Judah, Amaziah, son of Joash, was king and as kings went in those days, he was fairly good, but not too good, although quite above the average. First like a good son, he killed the men who murdered his father. He fought with the Edomites and slew *Ten Thousand* of them and took the city of Selah.

Then he got too self-confident and sent a mes-

sage to Jehoash, the king of Israel, "Come and let us look each other in the face." That meant in those days, "Come out, and see who is the better man."

Jehoash warned him to keep out of mischief, and not to think that because he had beaten the Edomites, he could defy the whole world, but Amaziah would not heed and attacked Israel. He was badly beaten and Jerusalem was taken by the Israelites and looted by them.

Amaziah reigned twenty-nine years, then a cabal was formed against him and he fled, but the conspirators followed him to Lachish and killed him there. And his son, Uzziah, who was sixteen at the time succeeded him, and reigned fifty-two years.

He was a good king and worshipped the Lord, but not perfectly. He prospered however, and fought and beat the Philistines and Arabians. He was a great soldier and general, and created many implements of war, machines to throw stones and arrows. Then he transgressed and went wrong.

Later in life, he developed leprosy, and died in a separated house for lepers, and his son Jothan, became king.

In the meantime, Jereboam was king in Israel and reigned forty-one years. He was a bad and lustful king, but somehow he seemed to thrive. He made war on the Syrians and defeated them several times, and captured many of their cities.

His son Zachariah became king of Israel after him. He only lasted six months, when Shallum

conspired against him, killed him and made himself king.

He lasted less, for he was killed after a month by Menahen, who took his place on the throne. This king was a regular savage, and utterly destroyed those parts of Israel which denied allegiance to him.

He reigned ten years just the same, and was bad to the core. At one time Pul, the king of Assyria (Not Syria) came up against Israel, but Menahen gave him a pile of money to go away without attacking the country, which he did. Menahan taxed the people heavily to raise the money and they dared not resist.

Menahan died at the end of ten years and his his son Pekahiah reigned in his stead. He reigned two years. Uzziah was still king of Judah at the time, in the fiftieth year of his reign.

Pekahiah was bad and Pekah, one of his captains, conspired against him, killed him and became king. Then Pekah ruled for twenty years. He was also very wicked, and had a troublesome reign.

Tigleth-pileser, king of Assyria, came with an immense army and captured many important cities of Israel, and carried the people captive to Assyria. Then Pekah was killed by Hoshea, who was the son of Elah (whose son he was, the Bible does not say). Then Hoshea became king, that is he made himself king, vice Pekah.

In the meantime, Uzziah, the king of Judah

had died, and had been succeeded by his son, Jotham. He reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and was a very good king. He had lots of trouble with the kings of Syria and Pekah of Israel. He died at the age of forty-one, and his son, Ahaz became king. He was twenty at the time and reigned sixteen years.

He was a very bad king (we can only use that description, but it is very monotonous) and worshipped idols of the heathens and fire, and burnt incense and sacrificed in all places, in defiance of the laws of the Hebrews.

Rezin, the King of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, made an alliance together and attacked Judah. They got to Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. But they took thousands of prisoners, men, women, and children.

Ahaz sent to Tigleth-pileser of Assyria, and sent him gifts of gold and silver to come up to help him against Syria and Israel. Fancy all these little chiefs, kinglets or whatever you like to call them, scrapping and squabbling in their little back-yards of land, each one boasting and bragging of his "kingdom."

Anyway, the Assyrians attacked the Syrians and captured Damascus, and killed Rezin the king, and carried the people to Assyria as slaves. Evidently Pekah ran away to Israel, because the Bible does not mention anything more of him here. But Ahaz went down to meet Tigleth-pileser to thank him and to worship his gods and idols.

We know no more of Ahaz, except that he died, was buried in Jerusalem and his son Hezekiah, succeeded.

Chapter XXI

THE DOWNFALL OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL—NEBUCHADNEZZAR

Hoseah was king now in Israel, after he killed Pekah, and of course he was as bad as the rest of the kings. Shalmaneser, now king of Assyria, attacked him, defeated him and made him pay tribute and swear fealty to him.

Hoseah made a conspiracy against Shalmaneser, with So, king of Egypt, but the Assyrian king found it out, captured Hoseah, and put him in fetters in prison. Then Assyria attacked Israel and besieged Samaria for three years.

He finally captured the city and all the land of the Israelites and carried the people away to Babylon, his chief city, and put people from Assyria in the cities of Israel.

Thus ended the kingdom of Israel.

In the third year of Hoseah's reign, Hezekiah became king of Judah in Jerusalem. He was twenty-five when he began to reign, and reigned twenty-nine years. He was a very good and pious king, and the Bible says that there was no king in Judah before or after him, as good, but as the Bible said that of at least one other king, it means nothing.

He drove out the false prophets and broke down the idols and the high places of sacrifice, and made the people be good again. He made a great Passover and invited the Israelites to join him in it. He fought against the Assyrians and beat them. He also fought the Philistines (trust these people for always turning up) and beat *them*, right to the gates of their chief city, Gaza, the town that you may remember Samson carried away the gates of.

In the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, the then Assyrian king, Sennacherib, came up to the land of Judah and took all the fortified towns. And Hezekiah paid him tribute to go away. He had to take the gold and silver from the Temple of the Lord to raise the funds. However, there must have been some further trouble between the Assyrians and the Judahites, because they came again with a big army and many threats.

Hezekiah sought advice of the prophet Isaiah, who told him to stand firm and withstand Sennacherib, which he did. A few days later, a report of trouble at Assyria reaching Sennacherib, and a terrible sickness, a sort of plague, breaking out in his quarters, killing several thousand soldiers, he returned home, where he was murdered by two of his sons. Another son, Esarhadden, became king of Assyria.

There is a famous poem by Byron which refers to the above onslaught on Judah, which commences as follows

"The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming with purple and
gold."

Then Hezekiah fell sick and he sent for the prophet Isaiah, who advised him to prepare for death for nothing could save him. Hezekiah prayed however to be spared and he got better. He died a little later and his son, Manasseh became king. He was only twelve at the time.

Manasseh reigned fifty-five years and was different in every way to his father, as bad as the latter was good. He restored all the idols and the high places, the false priests and the worship of the heathen gods, and was as bad as Ahab, the king of Israel. He used witches and wizards, and believed in sacrifice to fire, causing living people to be sacrificed to flames.

He made his people as bad and wicked as he was. He actually placed an idol in the Temple of God.

He shed innocent blood recklessly and was a wicked despot. Once he was captured by the Assyrians and taken captive to Babylon; then he was freed and returned to his country and his bad ways.

In spite of all, he reigned long and died in his bed, it seems, and the Bible says he was buried in his own garden. After him, his son, Amon, became king, but only reigned two years. He followed in his father's footsteps, was as bad as he was, and was killed by his servants at the end of a couple of years.

The people killed the murderers of Amon and made the latter's son, Josiah, king. He was only eight years old when he began to reign, and was king for thirty-one years.

He was a very devout, good king, after the ways of his grandfather, Hezekiah. He employed men to repair and restore the Temple of God, and did all in his power to restore the true worship of the Lord and the enforcement of the commandments.

In repairing the Temple, they found a book containing the words of the Law as laid down by God, and Josiah read it, and saw how terribly wicked the nation had become. He prayed to God and sent word to Huldah, who was a prophetess, (not a prophet) to ask her to intercede with God about these things.

She did so, or what was just as good in those days, said she did, and sent back the word of God to Josiah, to the effect that as the Jews had been so very bad and wicked and depraved, the anger of the Lord could not be quenched against them and that he would bring evil on them, and scatter them abroad from their own land; but because Josiah had been so good, he should have a peaceful ending, and not live to see the evil come on his people and the land in his day. Evidently, Huldah knew on which side her bread was buttered.

Then the king began seriously to set about destroying all vestiges of idolatry in Judah. He destroyed every idol and image erected to Baal, killed the false prophets, priests and idolaters and

thoroughly purified the holy places. Then he made the people keep the Passover, such a Passover as was never seen before. And the Bible says, as it said of a previous king, Hezekiah, that never before or after him was there so good a king. The Bible is very fond of these unnecessary repetitions.

Then Pharaoh-nechoh of Egypt, made an onslaught on Assyria, and Josiah turned against the Egyptian king, who begged him to desist. Josiah, however, attacked him, but was slain in battle by an archer, and his body carried to Jerusalem and buried with great pomp. Then the priests and the people made his son, Jehoahaz, king of Judah.

This young man was twenty-three when he began to reign, but only reigned three months. He was captured by Pharaoh-nechoh, and put into irons and carried prisoner to Egypt. Pharaoh-nechoh put the land of Judah under tribute and the nation was grievously taxed. Pharaoh also made another son of Josiah, Eliakim, king of Judah, in place of Jehoahaz, who died in Egypt.

Pharaoh changed the name of Eliakim to Jehoiakim, and made him give him much gold and silver for tribute, which the king taxed the people to pay, and they found it a very heavy burden.

Jehoiakim was twenty-five when Pharaoh made him king, and he reigned for eleven years. He was very wicked and bad. Then a great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, came up and attacked Judah and made him prisoner, but released

him and left him in Judah as his vassal for three years. Then Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, but Judah was attacked on all sides, by Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites and others, so that it looked as though Huldah, the prophetess, had guessed it right after all, about the land being taken away from the Hebrews after the death of Josiah.

Then Jehoiakim died and his son, Jehoiachin, became king. He was eighteen at the time and reigned only three months, although a few verses further on in the Bible it speaks of the *eighth* year of his reign. The wording is a little ambiguous, however. It says, "The king of Babylon took him prisoner in the eighth year of his reign." It may refer to the eighth year of the king of Babylon's reign, but it decidedly reads as though it refers to Jehoiachin's reign.

He had nothing to fear from Pharaoh of Egypt, because the Babylonians, who were now the strong people, had beaten the Egyptians and taken much of their land, but Nebuchadnezzar now came up and besieged Jerusalem, and captured it and took all the royal family prisoner.

The people were carried away prisoners also, and the Babylonian king took all the treasures of the Lord from the Temple and all the treasures of the king's house, and all the rest of the gold and silver and jewels that he could lay his hands on. Then he made Zedekiah king of Jerusalem, although his real name before had been Mattaniah, but it seems that Nebuchadnezzar did not like it.

He must have been very fussy about names, when one considers his own, which has such a nice rolling sound.

Zedekiah was twenty-one when he was made king, and he reigned eleven years, and had a bad and cruel reign, finally rebelling against the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar was a man of quick action. He came down with a tremendous army and camped around Jerusalem and besieged the city until the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign.

There was an awful famine in the land, absolutely no bread or food of any kind. Then the city was taken by storm, the king fled, was overtaken and captured and carried prisoner with thousands of others to Riblah. There his sons were killed before his eyes, then he was blinded, bound and carried away in fetters to Babylon.

Then the Babylonians looted the whole city of Jerusalem, burnt it with fire, burnt down the Temple of God, the king's palace, and all the great houses in the city. They broke down the walls that surrounded Jerusalem, and carried away most of the Hebrews prisoners, leaving only the very poor. Everything of the slightest value was taken by the victors, and the Jews became servants to the Babylonians for years and years until that nation went down in due course before the Persians, when that nation rose in might.

The Babylonians killed the High Priest and the other priests, and the principal scribes and officers of the Temple. And over the few people

that were left in the city, they made Gedaliah, ruler.

Gedaliah advised the people to serve the king of Babylon and everything would be well with them. But a few months later some of the men of the Jewish king's family, who had escaped the massacre of Nebuchadnezzar, conspired against and killed Gedaliah, also the Jews and Babylonians who were with him at the time. Then they fled to Egypt.

Later on there was another king of Babylon, Evil-merodach, who took that second but last king of Judah, Jehoiachin, who was in prison all this time in Babylon (he had been there for thirty-seven years) out of prison, treated him kindly, freed him and set him above all the other petty kings who were in Babylon as vassals to the country.

So ended the kingdom of Judah.

Chapter XXII

BABYLON—PERSIA—ESTHER

After an interval of considerable duration, of which the Bible makes no definite statement, the kingdom of Persia rose to power and ruled the whole of the eastern world. Cyrus was king and he declared that God had charged him to build a new Temple in Jerusalem. He called on the Jews to volunteer with their best workman, builders, decorators, masons and others, to go to the land of Judah.

Then the chiefs of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites, came forward, and Cyrus produced all the precious vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had looted from the first Temple, and which the Persians in their turn had looted from the Babylonians, and gave them to the Hebrews to use for the new Temple.

Fifty thousand people volunteered to go back and help rebuild the edifice. They laid the foundation and celebrated it lustily, just as people celebrate the foundation of any sacred or great building of today.

Many of the enemies of the Jews troubled them during all the building. First they wanted to help, but when the priests decided that it was *their* Temple, and told the others that it was none of their affair, they caused endless trouble,

which lasted through the life of Cyrus and into the reigns of other kings of Persia.

They made accusations against the Jews, very serious ones, during the reign of a later Persian king, Ahasuerus, and the Hebrews had to do much fighting to preserve their rights. There were other accusations in the reign of another king, Artaxerxes, which held up the entire further building of the Temple for many years..

When another Persian king, Darius, came to the throne, the Jews ventured to go on with the building, but the Persian officers wanted to know by what authority they were building. They referred him to the record of the time of Cyrus, which was found, and Darius allowed them to proceed and ordered their enemies not to molest them further.

At this time, the Jews were greatly controlled by the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. They finished the building and dedicated it in much rejoicing, and celebrated together. The children of Israel joined together now and prayed to God and became apparently good and pious men and women once more.

As we are on the subject of the Persians, it will be apropos to tell the story of Esther at this junction. It is very much like a fairy tale all the way through, and ends like one, but is much more beautiful.

Ahasuerus was the king of Persia at the time we speak of. He was a descendant of Cyrus, who had been dead a very long time. All these Persian

kings were really very good friends of the Jews and thousands of the Hebrews lived in Persia, happy and contended under the Persian rule.

Ahasureus was married to a beautiful queen named Vashti, and at this time he gave a great feast to all his lords, vassals and noblemen. Like good nobility, they got very drunk in the palace in Shushan, the Persian capital, Ahasuerus among the rest. The queen also gave a party to the noble ladies at the same time.

When he was thoroughly drunk, the king commanded Vashti to come to his feast, to shew off her beauty and let everyone see what a lovely wife he had, but she had the temerity and good sense to refuse to appear before such a lot of drunken swine.

The king was much incensed and asked his counsellors what should be done with such a woman who has done his royal person a serious wrong, and not alone to him, but to all men, because if once it became known that the queen had flouted the king, all women would begin to despise the men, and then what?

"Again," said he, "What will all our visitors think of us and our wives?"

The counsellors shook their heads, because it is always a bad thing to interfere between a husband and wife, especially when they are king and queen, but finally gave judgment as follows: that the king should dismiss the queen and never see her again, but get another queen in her place, and that when this decree was published, all

women would fear, respect and honor their husbands again.

This advice, given to the king by a man named Memucan, pleased him very much and he accepted and acted accordingly. Vashti was sent to the rightabout. Then the king felt that he had regained his self-respect.

The Bible does not mention whether Memucan was married or not.

As days passed on it became necessary to discover a new queen for Ahasuerus. He had dozens, perhaps hundreds of concubines or inferior wives, but none who held the first rank as queen. The officers of the court sent out on all sides for all the young and beautiful, virtuous maidens of good character to come to the palace to be inspected, so that a selection might be made for a consort for Ahasuerus.

There was living in Shushan at the time, a Jew of the name of Mordecai, of the tribe of Benjamin, who was bringing up a young and very beautiful orphan cousin, Hadasseh, or Esther. She was young, refined and lovely, and in due course she was sent or selected to go to the palace with the other maidens for the king to pass on her qualifications.

Mordecai instructed her on no account to let anyone know she was a Jewess, as there was, even in those days, a prejudice against the race. Mordecai came from a line of Israelites who had been brought down from Israel at the time Nebuchadnezzar had sacked and captured Jerusalem.

All these maidens were brought to the palace and had to go through many kinds of ceremonies and rites before presentation to the king, but anyway, no sooner did he see Esther than he fell in love with her on the spot, and made her queen.

Meanwhile, while on probation, as one might say, Mordecai watched over her daily from without the palace and when she was made queen, he took his place at the gate of the palace, so as to hear all the news he could of her.

Ahasuerus had a very important officer at the time, the head of all the princes, in fact, his most important minister, who was named Haman. He was a very proud and haughty man, loved homage and adulation and everybody bowed down to him, by order of the king. Everybody, that is, except Mordecai, who refused to do him reverence. Haman therefore, hated Mordecai with all his heart, and his life was filled with bitterness and gall on account of this want of respect on Mordecai's part.

Just about now, two of the king's men, Bigthan and Teresh, conspired against Ahasuerus, and Mordecai got to hear of it. He sent word of it to Esther, who informed the king, not omitting to let him know that Mordecai was the source of information, and the plotters were trapped and put to death. A record was made of the matter as was usual, in the Persian Book of Chronicles, and the affair was apparently forgotten in the usual course of things.

Haman now determined to rid himself of Mordecai, but as he considered the latter was too unimportant a person to be specially singled out by him for vengeance, and as his hatred was deep and far-reaching, also knowing that Mordecai was a Jew, he determined to get rid of all the Jews at one stroke. No doubt he knew the queen was a Jewess, or was in sympathy with them, and perhaps he hoped to get rid of her too, to satisfy his hate.

He went to the king and told him that there was a strange people living in Persia, different in their ways of living and religion, and alien in every way to the Persians, that they were enemies of the land, and always conspiring and plotting against the throne. He suggested to the king that they be done away with.

Ahasuerus falling in with the idea, as coming from his powerful minister, gave him letters of authority to have all the Jews killed on a certain day, and so rid the country of the lot of them.

Armed with this authority, Haman wrote to all the governors of all the Persian provinces, and to all authorities in other parts of the country, ordering them to kill every one of the Hebrews on the date mentioned, which was the thirteenth day of the Jewish month, Adar.

Naturally such an order could not get about without some leakage of it getting to the Jews, of whom there were many thousands, peaceful, hard-working people, in the country. So in due course Mordecai heard of it and immediately got in con-

tact with the elders of Israel. They discussed very earnestly what could be done in such a crisis.

Finally they decided to send word to Esther and warn her of the danger, because, as they pointed out, this enmity was aimed at *all* Jews, of which she was one, and "your father's house and all your relations will fall, and you cannot expect to be saved alone of them. Who knows but that the Lord has appointed you to save Israel."

Esther saw the danger and sent word back to Mordecai that she would do what she could with the king, but that it was a very questionable matter, as it was a matter of life and death to approach the royal presence, except by special command. She also told Mordecai to tell the Hebrews to set a special day aside for fasting and prayer to God to avert the danger overhanging them. This was done.

CHAPTER XXIII

ESTHER

Then Esther clothed herself in her royal robes, bejewelled herself and entered the king's presence, although the penalty was death for any to enter except so commanded; but as soon as the king caught sight of her, he held out his sceptre as a mark of welcome, and asked what boon she wanted, as it was evident that she would not have braved disregarding the edict without some pressing reason.

Esther replied, asking the king to attend a feast in her apartment the next day, and said she would proffer her request then, and invited Haman to join the king at the feast as a guest. The king accepted and Haman felt highly elated and flattered at the great honor done him, to be specially invited to dine with the king and queen.

He hastened home to impart the good news to his wife and followers, and as he left the palace, the first person he set eyes upon was Mordecai, who treated him with such disdain. This turned his joy to mortification and chagrin, and when he arrived home, he felt too ill to enjoy his triumph at the queen's invitation.

His folks all asked him the cause of his moodiness, and when he told them, they advised him to erect a gallows fifty feet high, so that he could hang Mordecai on it the next day, when all the

Jews were to be slaughtered by the Persians. This he decided to do, and gave orders to his underlings to attend to the matter. Meanwhile the Jews prayed and fasted.

That night, Ahasuerus could not sleep but tossed about, without getting any rest, from one cause or other. In the early morn he sent for the Chronicles of his reign and ordered his readers to read them to him to relieve his ennui. No doubt he thought they would be dreary enough to make him sleep.

In due course they came to the reading of the conspiracy against the king's life, which had been saved by Mordecai, and the king asked what reward had been hade to the man who had discovered and revealed the plot. He was informed that nothing had been done for him. Remember the king did not know that Mordecai was Esther's cousin.

At that moment, Haman entered the king's room to pay his respects and to ask permission to hang Mordecai. The first thing the king said to him was, "What shall I do to the man I would wish to honor?"

In Haman's mind, there was only one man who seemed to answer that description and that was himself, and thinking that the king wished to shower more honors on him, he replied that the man should be clothed in royal apparel, crowned with the king's crown and put on the king's horse, thus led through the streets of the city by a prince

of the first rank, the heralds proclaiming, "This is the man that the king delighteth to honor."

Then said the king, "Make haste, take Mordecai, who waits without at the gate, he who saved my life, and do to him as thou hast said, and thou shalt lead him through the streets of Shushan as thou hast spoken. Take heed and fail not in that particular."

Haman therefore had to escort his enemy and do him honor before everybody, and exalt him to his own discomfiture. He hurried home as soon as he could, and, greatly humiliated, hastened to the Queens' banquet.

At the repast, the king asked Esther what her petition was, and Esther, much agitated, told her story to him, told him that she was a Jewess and that she and all her people were endangered of their lives by a wicked enemy. "For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish."

The king, much enraged and aroused, demanded to know the name of the enemy, who dared to raise his hand to her, and she answered, "The enemy is the wicked Haman."

The king, shaken by anger and wine, left the room and went into the garden, while Haman fell on his knees to beg Esther for his life, but the king returning, met one of his chamberlains, who told him of the gallows that Haman had erected for Mordecai, (because now the courtiers saw the favorite falling, they all turned against him, just as has always been the case at all times), Mor-

decai, the man who was instrumental in saving the king's life; the king said instantly, "Hang Haman on that gallows," which was done, and the king was satisfied.

Then the king sent for Mordecai and gave him his signet ring, which made all obey him in the throne's name, and as the orders that had been sent out to kill the Jews could not be recalled, he gave Mordecai permission and instructed his own scribes or writers to send word to all provinces and all parts of the land for the Jews to band themselves together to defend their lives and property, and the lives and property of their families.

The Hebrews, were of course greatly elated and rejoiced at the news, and it is said that numbers of the Persians became Jews, because it was rather popular to be a Jew then.

When the day of destruction came, they not only defended themselves everywhere, but they attacked their enemies and smote them with great slaughter, right into the king's palace. Haman's ten sons were captured and hanged. The Bible says that Ahasuerus asked Esther what should be done to them, and she requested him to have them hanged. This is the only discordant note in this fascinating little tale, the really only human story in the Bible, and I hate to believe that Esther ever made such a ghastly request.

Altogether thousands of the enemies of the Jews were killed on this thirteenth day of Adar, and the fourteenth was given up to a great feast, which was called Purim, which the Jews keep to

this day. They call it Purim, which means "lots," because Haman had cast lot to see which day should be selected for the massacre.

Then Mordecai became chief officer, next to the king, and grew great and rich, and all the Jews grew great and rich and were happy and contented. As nothing more is known of Esther or Mordecai, we can presume that they lived happy ever after.

CHAPTER XXIV

JOB—THE PROPHETS—DANIEL

We have also the story of Job to entertain us. You have all heard the expression, "the patience of Job"; well, this is the story. We tell it here because the Bible inserts it after Esther, but they really have nothing to do with each other, but the chronology is doubtful.

There was a man in the land of Uz, which was most likely in the land of Israel somewhere, whose name was Job. He was very good and upright, did good to all, avoided evil and loved God. He had seven sons and seven daughters. He was very rich, had much land, herds, camels, and was a very important man. The Bible, rather exaggerating, says he was the greatest of all men of the East.

He was so good, that he used to pray to God for forgiveness of himself and children, **in case** they had sinned without knowing it.

The Bible tells the following story: One day at the meeting of God's angels before the Lord, Satan (you know who Satan is supposed to be) made fun of Job's honesty and uprightness, and said to God, "Anyone who is rich and has all the joys of life can pray and bless you. Suppose the man had trouble and was not so prosperous?"

God gave Satan permission to try Job's patience, provided he did not injure Job personally.

The Satan went ahead and destroyed all Job's flocks, sheep, camels, asses, herds of all description; he also sent a hurricane which killed his seven sons and seven daughters.

A runner came to Job with the bad tidings; Job rent his clothes and mourned, then worshipped and blessed God, "I came to the world with nothing, so shall I leave it. The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

Some of the readers of this tale may be familiar with this saying, as is so frequently used at various services, especially burials.

Again the angels of God assembled, Satan with them, and God reproached Satan, saying that he had greatly afflicted Job to try him out, but that he still remained true, perfect and upright. Satan admitted it was so, but asked how Job would be affected if personally hurt, in his flesh and bone, not so much in his material wealth. "Give him sickness and he will curse you."

So God gave Satan permission to torture Job, but on no account to slay him. Satan smote Job with boils all over his body, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. Some diabolical torture, as only those who have suffered from a attack of boils can testify.

Job suffered terribly and found the pains excruciating, and could find no relief, but made no complaint on his Maker. But his wife, out of patience with him, so calm under the stress of

his pain, said to him, "Do you still retain your belief in the Lord. Better curse him and die."

He answered however, "You are foolish; shall we always receive and not give?" And yet you cannot blame Job's wife; she was very natural in the matter, having lost fourteen children recently at one blow, and all her wealth and luxuries, besides having to nurse a sick and groaning husband. No wonder she lost patience.

Then Job's three friends came in to console him, and the Bible says they sat with him for seven days and nights and never spoke a word to him all the time. Consolation?

At the end of the seven days of mourning, Job opened his mouth and cursed the day he was born, and cried for death to relieve his sufferings, but never reproached God.

There are a good many chapters to this story of Job, forty-two in all, in which arguments are used by Job and his friends, endless, tiresome arguments on the goodness and otherwise of God, on Job's justifying his craving for death; on the impossibility of contending with the Lord or seeking explanation of his tardiness in punishment of the transparent wickedness of evildoers, how all evil is not punished in this world, but that there is a secret punishment for the wicked. But with it all, he never uttered a word of complaint or reproof of God,

At the end of all, God, having tested Job, and found him true, restored his health and his riches again, and he was wealthier than ever. The Bible

ends by saying, "He had seven sons and daughters," but whether they were the same children that were said to have been destroyed, is not explained. He lived to be one hundred and forty years old, and was a great grand-father at his death.

The latter part of the Old Testament is given up to the stories of the Prophets, very uninteresting and practically a hash-up of all that has previously been mentioned. None of them was of great importance, or if at all, very slight. We will run through them lightly, which is as much as they deserve.

Isaiah.

Isaiah was a prophet who lived in the times of Uzziah, Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah. The Bible devotes many chapters to him, mainly made up of denunciations of the Jews for their wickedness, and his predictions of their punishment.

He also predicted the coming of a Messiah to release the Hebrews from a long captivity, that he foretold. He saw the coming of the Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Egyptians and Romans, and the spreading across the world of the Hebrews.

His prophesies are damning in the extrême, with exhortations to be good; he spares no one, but impartially consigns all to perdition and des-

truction; altogether he was an over conscientious priest, but was not popular, as would be natural, and to be expected.

Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was another prophet of the time of Joash, of Judah, who denounced the nation with might and main. If anything, he was worse than Isaiah. But he also promised a return to the Holy Land under a Messiah.

He was however, too outspoken for the people, and was arrested and was in danger of his life, but escaped from same. There are fifty-two chapters given to Jeremiah's exhortations and five to his Lamentations, or cries over the desolated state of Jerusalem. They are very disconsolate, and far from elevating in their moaning and groaning, but all these prophets or priests, probably what we call witch doctors today, were only happy when prophesying trouble. We have some of them today in our midst, promising all sorts of eternal retribution.

Daniel.

In the reign of Jehoikim, King of Judah, when Nebuchadnezzar conquered the city of Jerusalem, and took many prisoners, he ordered that certain of the better of the Israelites, those who were in

good health, of good breeding and education, and of a scientific turn of mind, should be taken into his palace, and trained to be members of his council, and be taught the language and mode of the Chaldean people.

He even gave them a special allowance of wine and food (meat) from his own table, and arranged for them to be trained for three years to be fit to take their places amid the palace surroundings.

But one of the young men, Daniel, refused to eat the meat of the king, because it was not killed and prepared in the Jewish fashion, and it was against his scruples, so he begged the chief of the king's attendants to feed him ten days on vegetables, peas, lentils and similar foods and see how he would thrive on it.

This he did, and at the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends, called Shadrach, Mesheck and Abednego, did better on this food than all the other men on the richer viands. From then on the king's attendant fed them on the food they desired and they thrived accordingly.

These four men were extremely clever and studied deeply and studiously: the Bible says, God gave them learning and skill, and that Daniel had understanding of dreams and visions. A lot of people believe today that they can find meanings in dreams also.

The king, when they ultimately came before him, found them so bright and intelligent, that he gave them preference over all other persons. Daniel lived in great honor thereafter all through

the days of the Babylonian kingdom, and during part of the reign of Cyrus, the Persian, who later conquered Babylon.

One night Nebuchadnezzar had a dream. It troubled him very much, but unfortunately he had forgotten what it was about in the morning, except that he knew that he was much worried about it. He sent for all his prophets, wise men and magicians, and asked them to tell him what he had dreamed and what it meant. What a pickle for a prophet or a wizard to be in?

All they could say was, "Let your majesty (only they probably said, 'O King' instead of 'Majesty') tell us what you dreamed about, and the rest is easy, what it all means."

Nebuchadnezzar replied, "I have forgotten the dream, but you are wizards and wise men and prophets, and it is for you to tell me what I dreamed and its meaning. Great rewards will be yours if you do; if not, I will have you all killed and your homes destroyed.

Then these men had to confess that it was impossible for them to say what the king had dreamed about, so he had them all killed, in fact he gave orders that all wise men in Babylon should be sought out and killed. This of course, included Daniel and his three friends, who had not been at the interview between the king and the magicians.

Daniel sent word to the king that if he had a day or two to think it over, he would discover what the dream was, and interpret it. They gave him time, and he went home and consulted his

friends, which however, did not help very much, but that night the secret was revealed to Daniel in a vision.

The next day, Daniel went to the king and told him the dream and its explanation. He first told him that it was due to God in Heaven that it was revealed to him, as a warning for his later days.

Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed that he had seen an immense image of metal, the head of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the legs and thighs of brass and iron, the feet part clay and part iron. A stone struck the feet and broke them to pieces, then the whole statue, having no foundation, fell to pieces and was scattered to the winds.

In the dream, the image represented the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, a great and strong country at this time, but one that would surely grow weaker as the generations passed and ultimately be destroyed in its own weakness.

Nebuchadnezzar gave great honors to Daniel and his friends, making the former Governor over all the other governors in Babylon, and appointing the latter to very high places in the government.

Chapter XXV

DANIEL (Continued)—JONAH

Soon after this, the king issued an order that all his people should bow down and worship an immense image, that he had built. All did so, with the exception of Shadrach, Mesheck and Abed-nego, and the king was informed that they were disobeying his orders and worshipping their own God.

Nebuchadnezzar fell into a fury and commanded that they should be cast into a furnace and burnt to death, and he even ordered that the flames should be made seven times as hot as they usually were. So the three men were bound and cast into the fire dressed in their clothing. Daniel is not mentioned in this story, although there is no doubt that he was no better than his friends in this matter.

The fire was so hot that the Bible says the men who put the victims into it were scorched to death. They must have been very clumsy at the job, or not used to the work, I should judge.

Then the king came to look at the fire, and said, "Were not three men bound and cast into the fire? Behold there are four in there," and when they looked, sure enough, there were the three men, unbound, walking about, and a fourth, an angel of God, with them.

Then the king called out, "Come forth, you men of Israel," and Shadrack, Mesheck and Abednego came from the furnace, unbound, unhurt, without a hair of their heads singed. Then the king, in great admiration, gave orders that they should be allowed to worship their God, for, as he said, "no other god could do as this god had done," and he promoted them and raised them to higher rank.

This is a very pretty and interesting story, and not even in the Arabian Nights is there one better than this.

Then Nebuchadnezzar had another dream, which Daniel interpreted. He saw a very high tree, so high that it reached into heaven, with beautiful leaves and fruit, so big that it formed a vast shadow for beasts, and so thick in foliage that fowls roosted in it. And a voice called from heaven, "Hew down the tree, cut off its branches, scatter its fruit and shake off its leaves, but leave the stump of the tree."

Daniel told the king that this meant, that the tree represented his kingdom, and that he would be driven from it in time, and would dwell among the beasts, until he realized that God could give and take away his kingdom at His will, when the kingdom would be returned to Nebuchadnezzar, and he should dwell among man again.

All this came true some time later. He was taken with madness while walking in his palace, while glancing complacently at his treasures and his riches, and thinking of his greatness, and ran

away into the forest, where he lived like an animal for seven years, eating grass, herbs and all growing things, till his hair had grown **like eagle's feathers and his nails like bird's claws.**

At the end of seven years, his reason returned and he realized the mightiness of the Lord, and prayed to him and he returned to his kingdom, where he reigned again.

After Nebuchadnezzar died, his son Belshazzar became king and was a pretty poor specimen of a monarch. He gave himself up to sports and pleasures of life. He was a very weak king and a voluptuary, and enemies sprang up on all sides. The Persians had been getting stronger and stronger and had made forays on Babylon, which nation had become lazy and neglectful and had gradually fallen into a state of weakness and decrepitude.

Even now, the Persians were making enormous efforts for a final onslaught on Babylon. The Babylonians had great faith in, and relied on their natural protection, the River Euphrates, which encompassed the city, and which they depended on to keep the enemy out, as a natural barrier.

Belshazzar made a great feast and invited all the lords and ladies of the court, his wives and concubines. They used all the sacred vessels that had been taken from the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem and drank from them. When the evening was pretty advanced, by which time they were all of them pretty well drunk, a hand was seen writing on the plastered wall.

They could see the fingers and the hand, also the wording but nothing else, and the words were strange and no one understood them.

What with strange handwriting on the wall, with words that nobody understood, and dreams that nobody could interpret, these Babylonians must have had a very perplexing time.

There was a hurried call for wizards and prophets, but whether the prophets were too drunk or did not know their business, none of them could explain the writing; then suddenly someone remembered Daniel, who used to interpret the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar so nicely, so they sent out to see if he were living and to bring him, if he were.

They found him and brought him to Belshazzar, who offered him liberal rewards to interpret the words. Daniel told them to keep their rewards, but said he would interpret the handwriting. He reminded the king how his father, Nebuchadnezzar was a great, mighty king with the power of life and death in his hands, was a mighty man of valor and was absolute in all the ways of his great and mighty kingdom; yet when the Lord God found his heart hardened against him, he drove him from his throne, and kept him away till he repented, and acknowledged the Lord's omnipotence.

"But, thou, Belshazzar, although thou hast known all this, hast turned against God, and never humbled thyself. Thou hast taken the holy vessels of the Temple, thou and thy lords, ladies, wives and concubines, and hath drunk from them

and thou hath glorified thy false gods and hath avoided the true God.

The meaning of these words is as follows: they read, Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsim. The four words mean:

God has numbered thy kingdom and finished it.

Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

Daniel was amply rewarded and sent away with great honors, but that very night the Persians under Darius attacked the city, turned the waters of the Euphrates and sacked Babylon. Belshazzar was slain and the kingdom of Babylon destroyed to all history.

It is not improbable that Daniel was in touch with the Persians, who were really friends of the Jews, and his interpretation of the hand-writing was not so wonderful after all, in spite of his great wisdom. One thing is sure, he was in much honor with Darius the king of Persia, and held high office under him. Naturally he made a number of enemies among the other princes and petty chiefs.

They conspired against him and caused the king to issue a decree that no one should be allowed to ask a petition or pray to any God or person for thirty days, except of the king himself. Darius not knowing their object, signed the decree.

Daniel knew of the decree yet nevertheless, said his prayers and petitions daily to God, and the princes at once denounced him to Darius, who was greatly grieved, because he loved Daniel and hesitated to enforce the law against him, but the princes reminded him that according to the laws of the Persians, once made, it could not be changed, not even by a king, and it must be enforced in this case.

The king admitted this, and ordered Daniel to be thrown into a lion's den, which was the punishment decreed, but he said to Daniel, "Thy God, whom thou servest continually, shall save you." So Daniel was thrown to the lions.

The king passed the night praying and bewailing Daniel's fate and in the morning he hurried to the lions' den and called, "Daniel, Daniel," and to his great joy, Daniel answered him, and said that God had protected him during the night, and the lions had not molested him.

Overjoyed, the king ordered him released, and his accusers, their wives and their children thrown in to the animals, who gobbled them up. And the king made Daniel great and he prospered during his reign, and his son's, Cyrus' reign. He died at a good old age.

The story of Esther is a much prettier one, being so much more simple, and having no miracles in it.

There was a prophet who lived probably at the time of the dispersion of the Jews. His name was Jonah, and the word of the Lord came to

him, "Go to Ninevah, and reprove the people, as they are very wicked." So the Bible tells us.

Jonah did not relish the work, so he went to the town of Joppa, and took a ship to Tarshish, hoping to get out of the way of God. But a great storm came up on the trip and the sailors were scared and each prayed to his own god, and threw all the cargo overboard to lighten the ship. Jonah was asleep, and was the only one not to pray, and the sailors asked him, "How is it, that you sleep while we perish? Get up and pray to your god to save us." You see, they weren't particular which god saved them, so long as they *were* saved, so they called on all.

The storm, not going down, like very superstitious people, they decided to cast lots to find out who was responsible for the tempest, as they were sure that someone on the ship was, and who do you suppose the lot indicated the criminal as? Jonah, as no doubt you guessed.

Then they accused him of wrongdoing, and he admitted that he had done wrong, so they threw him overboard, after which the storm abated. It naturally would have done so anyway, after Jonah was thrown in, some time or other.

Jonah was swallowed by a big fish, so the Bible says, a fish prepared by the Lord, and he was in the fish's stomach for three days and three nights; then he prayed to God to let him out and excuse his fault, and God made the fish vomit him on dry land.

Then Jonah went to Ninevah and reproached the people and told them that they and their city would be destroyed in forty days, and the people repented and mourned and turned to good ways again, and the destruction was averted.

Nothing else is worth mentioning of any of the other prophets, and much of what has been written could be omitted without impairing any value the Bible has, as a history.

Chapter XXVI

BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST

We are now coming to the birth of Christ, which occurred about five hundred years after the time of Esther, it is believed. Between the time of the Persians and this new period there is a great gap in the Bible, which is not explained, but from other sources we know that there was a king of Persia named Xerxes, another Artaxerxes, then another Darius. There may, and probably were, other Persian kings besides, but these we know of, at least.

Gradually the Persian kingdom decreased in might and a new power, Macedonia or Greece arose. In the year 335 B. C. or thereabouts, Alexander the Great, called a Greek, although a Macedonian, captured Persia, and the Grecian dominion lasted for about two hundred and fifty years, when the Romans, under Pompey, took Jerusalem and Judea became a Roman province. In the year forty (40 B. C.) Herod was made king of Judea. The last king of Persia was Darius, but not the Darius referred to previously of course.

To go back just a little, Alexander of Greece ruled over Judea, but it does not appear that the Jews were unhappy under his sway, in fact, he was very mild and well disposed towards them. In time he passed away, and various rulers governed the Hebrews.

Severe attempts were made to introduce Greek gods and culture among the Jews, even to the extent of forbidding the worship of their God, and to install the worship of the Greek gods entirely. A rebellion broke out among the Jews, under the leadership of Matthias, a priest, who, with his many sons, one of whom, Judas Maccabeas, became a great hero of these wars, defeated their enemies frequently and put them to rout, and finally regained control of the situation. Then Matthias died.

After this the Jews broke up into sects; the Pharisees, very orthodox, and what you might call today, fundamentalists, who insisted on the strict letter of the law as laid down by Moses and confirmed by the prophets; the Sadducees, more tolerant in their belief; the Essenes, who believed that the only way to remain holy and religious was to keep away from all defilement and contamination, and therefore went to live in the desert away from temptation; and other of different sorts of ideas.

As all these disagreed with each other except on some rare occasion, when two of the sects might agree on disagreeing with the others, the Jewish nation was now in a sorry plight. The Pharisees attacked the Sadducees, and being stronger for the time, a reign of terror resulted.

Thousands of Jews had fled and lived peaceably in Egypt and other places.

Finally Rome, which had become the great power of the world, that is, the world that is

mentioned in the Bible, the only known world civilized at the time, or known as such, took command of the whole situation and ruled Egypt. The Romans made Herod king. This was about 40 B. C., that is, forty years before the birth of Christ.

Herod was a very bad, vicious king, mean and degenerate. Rome was very great in those days, rich, voluptuous and powerful. All beliefs were practically gone. The Romans had many gods and sneered at them all. The only god they did not dare to sneer at was their ruler or Caesar, who (that is, the later Caesars) demanded to be regarded as gods.

Towards the end of the reign of Herod, an event took place at a very small, unimportant place called Nazareth. It was only really a hamlet in Galilee in Judea. There lived a man named Joseph, a carpenter, of the lineage of David, the great king, and a girl, Mary, also of the same breeding, but both, at this time, very low in the social scale.

Joseph was to marry Mary, but found, according to the Bible, that she was about to become a mother, and naturally hesitated to wed her. An angel of God is said to have assured him that Mary was pure and innocent, and the child to be born was begotten by the holy spirit of God, and would be His son and the promised leader of the Jews, in fact THE Messiah, whose coming had been predicted hundreds of years before.

Joseph was therefore told to marry Mary, which he did.

When the time came for the child to be born, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem, according to an edict issued by Caesar Augustus, by which every man had to return to the home of his birth (which in this case was Bethlehem) to be taxed.

The story of Jesus Christ is a very difficult one to render in simple fact, especially as taken from the Bible, which states everything as a fact, even when reason is against facts, so stated. One matter of fact is, that nothing positive that is said of Christ was written down in any form, until hundreds of years after his death, and then more from hearsay and tradition. Except by a comparatively few, he was not remembered or recalled in any way, then.

Remember too, that in the times we are writing of, practically no true religion or honest belief of any description existed, life was precarious, no man knowing what the next day would bring forth, the whole known civilized world given up to voluptuousness and pleasure. People's minds were thoroughly dislocated on right and wrong; might ruled despotically.

The divinity of Jesus has been attacked again and again by some, if not most, of the greatest people of all ages, but particularly modern ages, now that thought can no longer be confined; the Virgin birth or Immaculate Conception, is openly scouted by almost every man of intelligence, and the miracles imputed to Jesus, to which we shall

come in due course, are not considered worthy of credence.

Yet in spite of all this, a man can be a very good Christian in the best sense of the word, without believing in a single item of these ridiculous tales of magic. The story in the Bible is incomplete and faltering, so bolstered up with improbabilities that we shall have to go outside its source at times to get a reasonable possibility to it all.

Whether Jesus existed or not, which has even been questioned, the fact is that Christianity *does* exist to this day, although it is hardly ever practised, especially by its professional professors. So that, even if the whole story is a half-hashed fiction, yet it must be founded on some principle of a sort or other.

We go back to the Bible.

When Joseph and Mary arrived at Bethlehem, they could get no accommodation at the inn, and had to take refuge in a stable. Judging from what we can learn of these times, perhaps they were lucky not to find accommodation. In the stable, a baby was born during the night.

The story of Mary's condition had preceded her, and people came from all parts to see the child. Among them were the Magi, or Wise Men of the East, the prophets. They seem to have come a very great distance to see Jesus, and then went away again, and forgot all about him.

By the way, the name Jesus, which now stands out so prominently as something distinctly Christian, was a purely Jewish name in that day, and

if not common perhaps, was frequently used among the Jews. Christ practically means Messiah.

Herod heard of the worship of the child and was much disturbed by it. Being king of the Jews, he did not much like the possibility of a new claimant to his throne later on. He tried to find Joseph, Mary and Jesus, and gave orders that all children under the age of two should be killed, so as to ensure that Jesus should be among them.

Joseph and Mary were warned in time and escaped to Egypt, probably to the city of Alexandria, and settled there till Herod died; then they returned to Nazareth, where probably Joseph died, because no further mention is made of his name. In the meantime, Mary had other children, both boys and girls, Jesus' brothers and sisters.

There is one peculiarity in the Christian calendar. Although we figure the years supposedly as number one from the date of Jesus' birth, as a matter of fact, it is believed that there is a difference of five years in this figure, that Jesus must have been actually five years old, at the time we start with the year one. Not even the date, now called December the twenty-fifth, is known to be the true date of his birth. These differences have been located by various tracings, and other reasonably correct datings of events, and by inference.

At the age of thirteen, Jesus became, accord-

ing to the Jewish law, a man, responsible for his own acts and life, thereon. He seems to have been older than his years, but no one so far had attached any importance to him. This is where the Bible is so ambiguous and confusing. As a baby, it made him regarded as a divinity, and then everybody seems to have forgotten about him for years, till he himself brought himself to their notice, as we shall see presently.

He had to help his mother, now a hard-working widow, who also seems to have forgotten his divinity. He became a carpenter and helped at home in other ways.

At this time, Tiberius was Emperor at Rome, and Pontius Pilate, Governor of Jerusalem.

Jesus had a cousin John, afterwards known as John the Baptist. He was the son of a Jewish priest named Zacharias, and his wife Elizabeth, and was born very late in their married life. John took to the principles of the Essenes, and lived a lonely and hermitical life away from his people, in the desert. He believed that water would wash away people's sins and washed himself repeatedly, hence the name Baptist. He was a great exhorter and preacher, and appeared at frequent intervals to the people, calling them to God and repentance.

He told them, perhaps referring to the coming Messiah, that a leader greater than he was coming. He had many followers and baptized them all, after making them confess their sins. In a good many ways he reminds one of the prophet

Isaiah, but the Bible makes him as little human as it possibly can.

It does not appear that he was acquainted with his cousin Jesus at all, and when Jesus sought him out later, they do not seem to have known or recognized each other. All relationship between them is avoided.

As the years passed on, the spirit of the prophets appeared in Jesus Christ, now a man, and the fact or possibility of him being the Messiah, revived among the people. Jesus came to John to be baptized, but John said, "Surely I should come to you, not you to me." He baptized him anyway, and from that moment people began to believe in Christ, who now devoted his whole time to the salvation of his brethren.

It was a dangerous game he was playing. The corrupt leaders of the Jews (not that they were any more corrupt than their time) under the authority of a much more corrupt Roman governor, himself under a greater and more unlicensed ruler, were now roused to arms at a man, coming from the most abject obscurity, travelling all over the land, attacking their wickedness, looseness of morals, trickery and humbug.

Chapter XXVII

JOHN—THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The poor people acclaimed Jesus on all sides and he always took the part of the lowly and downtrodden. Naturally, a man of this character was a menace to the powers higher up and their authority was much undermined with the growth of his spiritual power.

It is said in the Bible, that Satan, the devil, tempted Jesus sorely in times of his distress, but that Jesus defied him, saying, "Get thee hence, Satan." He seems to have made his headquarters at a place called Capernaun, and now devoted his whole life to preaching and exhortation and does not seem at any time after this, to have re-joined his family or home circle.

At this time there was another Herod, king of the Jews. He was also a bad scoundrel, both as man and king, and had taken his brother's wife, although his brother was still living. Her name was Herodias, and she had a daughter, Salome, who was no doubt, no better than her mother, who certainly was no better than her daughter.

John the Baptist, who had become very active in his denunciations recently, attacking especially the Jewish body of elders, the Sanhedrim, now openly attacked Herod for his affair with Herodias. Herod had no particular grudge against John,

personally, and perhaps considered him of too little importance to affect a great king like himself; but no doubt his feelings were worked upon by Herodias, who was infuriated with John, and he had him arrested and cast into prison, where he lay for some time.

The end of John was this. Some considerable time later, Herod gave a great feast, at which all the officers and nobles of the court were present, and they all got very merry. In this condition, Herod sent for Salome to dance for the crowd, as she seems to have been very talented in terpsichore.

When she had amused them and the drunken crowd had applauded her, Herod asked what reward she wanted, even to half his kingdom. This was the customary large-hearted manner of that day, although several descendants of these tribes have the same all-embracing cordiality in their speech.

Salome retired to consult her mother as to the reward to be asked, and Herodias, who had nourished a bitter enmity against John all the time, told her to demand the head of the Baptist on a plate. Herod, suddenly sobered at the request, might have balked at it, but his word was pledged and as Salome insisted on it, he instructed his executioners to decapitate John and bring his head on a dish, which was done, for Salome and her mother to feast their eyes on.

When the news of John's death spread, the people were greatly stirred and looked to Jesus

to make some step to assert his claim as Messiah and their leader, but he did nothing but passed along quietly.

The Sanhedrim sent for him, asking him if he were really the Messiah, to satisfy them if so, and to have him punished if he were an imposter. He treated their deputation with contempt, and they denounced him as a fanatic and a pretender.

He now had a very large following of all kinds of people and the Bible quotes many instances of miracles, wrought by him, such as making the blind see, healing the totally blind, bringing the dead to life, making half a dozen loaves or the same number of fishes feed thousands of persons; but people of sane minds and ordinary intelligence no longer give credence to such unnatural stories, without the slightest corroboration or possibility of fact, especially as there is so much good to be learned from the story of Jesus, whether true or not, from other matters.

As regards making the blind see, sores on the eyes and lids was a very common sickness with these people, from dirt and neglect, and he no doubt suggested ordinary cleanliness and sanitation. Several of these nomadic tribes at the present day in these districts, are no better in their sanitary arrangements than they were then, and would be better for a good bath.

There is always this point to be remembered, that Jesus probably understood a little of medicine, a little of the value of the herbs and roots as

curatives, of hygiene and the benefit of fresh, clean, wholesome air, which the majority of the people were thoroughly ignorant of, and he made use of his knowledge possibly many a time in these "miracles."

He now gradually drew around him several disciples or apostles, who he later used to disseminate his principles. The chief of these men was Simon, later called Peter, whom we now know as Saint Peter. Peter had a brother, Andrew, and both had been formerly fishermen, but they were led to follow Jesus by his eloquenc.

The other disciples who joined at a later period, from time to time, were Philip, Bartholomew, John, James, Matthew, Thomas, Thaddeus, another Simon, another James, and Judas Iscariot. Another great apostle, Paul, whose real name was Saul, was a great enemy of Christianity, as the religion Jesus founded was afterwards called; Paul was a Roman citizen, and as such, persecuted the Christians for years after the death of Jesus, but ultimately became a good Christian himself, was baptized, and became an ardent, active professor of Christianity.

The Bible does not refer to him much, but he was of sufficient importance for us to mention him here, although he does not appear in history till much later. The great Cathedral in London is named after him, just as the one at Rome is named after Peter.

Christ gathered the people and his disciples around him, and ascending a mount in Galilee,

delivered a sermon to the assembly, which is a wonderful piece of moral and ethical oratory and teaching. If but half a dozen or less of the precepts he uttered there were believed in and carried out today, there would be no need for any churches, chapels or places of worship for any creed or belief, nor would there be any need for division of opinion as to the rights or wrongs of any belief.

Christ's religion, when reduced to plain language and simplicity, not dressed up in flowery, extravagant, meaningless phraseology as used in the Bible, with the deliberate intention of the translators to confuse and confound the very ones it should be transparent to, is all contained in the following few of the most important of his advices and injunctions:

Judge not, lest ye be judged; forgive and ye shall be forgiven.

He, who is without sin, shall cast the first stone.

Do unto others as ye would have others do to you.

If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and throw it away; better to lose an eye, than the whole body to perish from infection.

You have been told not to forswear; that is perjure; but I say, do not swear at all, do not take any oaths, not by Heaven or by Earth, nor by your head. Say yes or no, and let that be sufficient.

Instead of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, I say, to him that hitteth thee on the cheek, turn the other cheek.

Do not give alms ostentatiously; and when you give let not thy right hand know what thy left hand does. Give quietly and in secret, make no parade of your giving; your reward is in the good done.

And when you pray, also pray without a shewing of your piety.

No man can serve two masters, God and Mammon.

Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; tomorrow is another day, and will take care of itself.

He that is not with me is against me.

A tree is known by its fruit.

How can those, being evil, speak good, for the mouth speaketh from the goodness of the heart.

By thy words, thou shalt be justified or condemned.

To him who hath, shall be given.

When blind lead the blind, both shall fall in the ditch.

If a man gains the whole world, but loses his own soul, what profiteth him.

Forgive your enemies not seven times, but seventy times seven, if necessary.

Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter Heaven.

Many are called, few are chosen.

The poor are always with us.

Those who live by the sword shall perish by the sword.

See not the mote in thy brother's eye, but think of that in your own.

Give not that which is holy to the the dogs, nor cast pearls before swine.

Seek and ye shall find.

Walk the straight and narrow road; the wide gate and broad paths lead often to destruction.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted; he that exalts himself shall be abased.

If thy right hand or foot offend thee, cut it off.

A house (family) divided against itself fall-eth; as with a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.

Greater love hath no man, but this, that he can lay down his life for a friend.

Now of course, some of the meanings of these sayings are obscured and are not literal, but the sense is plain, and the intention is clearly apparent.

Christ also advocated the following prayer: God, our Father in Heaven; give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as

we should forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, deliver us from evil.

Even those who do not hold with prayer can find little to carp at with this simple supplication.

Chapter XXVIII

THE DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES

Jesus never turned his back on sinners, and they frequently sat with him and his disciples; he also was seen in the company of publicans. Now a publican was a particularly low-in-the-scale person. He was really a tax gatherer.

You know how we love a tax gatherer in these days. Well a tax gatherer in the day of Christ was lower than the lowest, vilest wretch of the gutter. Tax gathering was a regular business, the value of the collections for each section of the country being sold to the highest bidder, who paid so much to the ruling power.

The bidder would then subcontract it and get a stated sum and again it would be subcontracted to other contractors till at last it got down to a very minor collector, who also had to pay a price for the privilege. As everyone of these subcontractors had to make a profit on what we might call the ultimate consumer, the "publican," rough, coarse, vulgar men of the gutter were employed to do the actual collecting.

The people were therefore thoroughly exploited and paid probably many times the fair tax they should have, but had no redress, and hated the publicans heartily. These men were even despised among themselves and no one associated with them.

One of them, named Levi, followed Jesus, became a disciple, and was renamed Matthew. As Jesus said, when reproached for being in such company, "Those who are well need no physician, only those who are sick."

This enraged the Jewish leaders to exasperation, and they hated Jesus and his teachings with an intensity of feeling, not hard to comprehend in their position. They, with all their authority and leadership, could not stem the trend or drift of the public to him, in spite of his obscure extraction and calling.

Reports came in hourly and daily of the miracles and cures he had performed, and you may be sure that they lost nothing of exaggeration in the telling. Even if the elders knew that they were easy of explanation, still the common people believed, and the priests could not minimize them, without reflecting on their own works.

Jesus was making converts by the thousands, and these leaders could see that no threats or reprisals could influence him in his course of action. He openly flouted the priests and leaders, refused to meet and debate with them, something they tried many times to get him to do, and preached against them and their pretences and hypocrisy.

The idea of a Messiah coming as he did, without a flourish of trumpets and noisy demonstrations, was inexplicable to them, which was not so surprising, considering how their prophets had predicted this coming so often, and his indiffer-

ence at their threats inflamed their passions. Moreover, he now openly declared himself in Nazareth the Messiah, the son of God, and while many scouted his claims, many more accepted him and his precepts.

In Nazareth it is true he was practically driven away, as the public did not believe in him, but then this was his home town, and a "prophet is without honor in his own country." He went to live at Capernaun, and really made that his headquarters from then on, travelling abroad to other cities from time to time, and fearlessly preaching the Gospel of his faith.

His family probably lived in Capernaun, but he seems to have lived apart from them, and they, on their part, seem to have accepted the situation, as one that should and had to be.

His actions thoroughly convinced the masses that he was the long-expected Messiah, and he was warmly acclaimed wherever he went. Some of the disciples at times, however, expressed some doubts as to his divinity, but the disciples generally were not men of strength of character, though perhaps of faith.

His enemies, the Jewish elders, made up their minds that the man was too dangerous to leave at large, and determined at all costs to get rid of him; they decided to trap him in any way that was possible, either by accusing him of breaking their laws and so coming under their ban, or proving him guilty of plotting against the power of Rome.

But Rome was a long way off, and Pontius,

who represented her at Judea, was not likely to fall into any trap they might set for him to condemn Jesus. It was therefore necessary to be very cautious and wily in proceeding against Christ.

They complained that on one or two occasions he had assumed the authority of God in his speeches, as though he himself were the Lord or possessed the power of right or wrong on earth, and there is little doubt but that the Bible **does** so represent him as doing.

They accused him of blasphemy but he counter-accused them, and they were easily confounded. Their resentment developd into active hostility and they bided their time.

In Jerusalem, where he went in due course, he found the Temple of God thoroughly defiled. Instead of being given up to worship and sacredness, it had actually been turned into a trading market, where commodities of all kinds were dealt in, and as a fact, money lenders and usurers pursued their calling in its precincts.

Christ, followed by his disciples and the populace, marched to the Temple and drove out these vermin and cleansed and purified the Temple, then sanctified it. He was so implicitly trusted and followed by the people, that he carried all before him and no one dared bar him.

Naturally this threw great alarm into the Jewish elders. At this time Jesus and his disciples walked through the fields on a Sabbath, and his followers were hungry; they plucked ears of corn (a very heinous sin to commit on a Satur-

day) and ate them. Then the Pharisees asked in great horror, "Is this not a great sin to commit on the Sabbath?" But he replied, "Did not David eat the holy bread when he was hungry?"

Then when he came to synagogue on the same day, he found a sick man, to whom he attended, cured and sent home, and again, hoping to trap and convict him of heresy, the Pharisees said, "Surely it is a crime to heal on the Sabbath." But he answered, "If one of you had a sheep and it fell in a pit on the Sabbath, would you not lift it out and save it? Is not a man more than a sheep?"

Then his enemies withdrew into council, as to how to use these matters to his injury, but Jesus was warned of it, and left the neighborhood and journeyed elsewhere. He now sent his disciples among the people with instructions to spread his Gospel among all. Some of them were very half-hearted in the matter, but he strongly encouraged them and advised them how to act.

At this time occurred the tragic death of John, that has been related earlier in this history. All Judea now looked to Jesus to take the lead, as they recognized that a crisis had come. Jesus was unmoved, however, and made no motion, and many of the people and even some of the disciples cooled somewhat in their ardor.

The Bible now states that Jesus told his disciples that he would have to go to Jerusalem on his mission, and that in all probability he would be captured, sentenced and killed there by the

chief priests and elders. Peter objected to his going, and said he should not go.

Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art offensive to me. I speak of God, thou art earthly." He also rebuked all the disciples at times for their want of faith, and encouraged and raised their spirits.

He now went to Jerusalem with his disciples and immediately became involved in controversies with the priests, who accused him of usurping power that was not his right. A battle of words followed that led to nothing, as the priests feared the multitude following Christ.

They then thought to trap him by asking the question, "Is it right to pay tribute to Caesar?"

Jesus replied, "Bring a coin," which they did. He then showed them the impression of Caesar on it, and asked for whom it was intended, and they answered "Caesar."

"Then," quoth he, "render unto Caesar, things that are Caesar's."

He then turned on them and accused them vigorously, attacking them for their hypocrisy, lying, roguery, plundering of the poor, and corruption, and foretold of dire disaster and dissolution and ruin to come to them, and defied them to their faces to act their worst toward him. Finally he consigned them to Hell as vipers.

You may be sure that they loved him no more for this. The Passover feast was at hand, and Jesus told his disciples that he would be betrayed by one of them into the hands of his en-

emies on that occasion, and would be captured and sentenced. As a matter of fact, one of them, Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest and made a bargain to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Chapter XXIX

DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST

Although the Bible does not say so, it would appear that Jesus and the disciples were going to have the Passover Feast in secrecy in Jerusalem, which was very natural, considering the danger of denunciation that he was in. This meal is always referred to as the last supper, and many famous paintings have been made of the scene; Jesus, in the centre, and the disciples arranged evenly on each side of him.

He stated as they sat down that he expected to be arrested at that meal, as he knew that one of the present company had betrayed him. No doubt he had been warned by one of his well-wishers, and equally no doubt, he was tired of flying before his foes, who he recognized, would ultimately consummate his destruction.

The Bible claims that he actually indicated Judas, mentioning him by name, but that is barely possible, because that would have broken up the supper party, which followed the Passover service.

The disciples all expressed their faith and hope in him, but he told Peter, that in spite of his professions, and in spite of the true love he bore him, yet he (Peter) would deny him three times that very night.

Peter replied, "Even if I died for it, I shall

never deny you," but Christ merely shook his head.

The service ended, they all retired, feeling sad at heart and wearied at the trials and tribulations. All was quite and restful. Suddenly there was a great commotion, and Judas, who had left them earlier, came, and with him a number of elders and priests of Judea, and many Roman soldiers, and in the name of Caesar, arrested Jesus. Judas gave Christ a kiss when he entered with the mob, so that the soldiers should be sure to arrest the right man; hence a kiss of insincerity and deceit today, is called a Judas kiss.

Here again the Bible is very contradictory. Christ was so well known and recognizable to everybody, that there would seem to be no necessity for identifying him, especially as the priests were fully acquainted with him. But that is the way of the Bible.

One of the disciples, Peter, it is said, drew his sword (no mention is made anywhere else in the Bible that they wore swords, in fact all inferences are to the contrary) and struck a servant of the High Priest who was present, and cut off his ear, but Christ bade him forbear. Then all the disciples fled. In fact, at no time did they show faith or strength in their claimed belief.

Jesus was taken to Calaphes, the High Priest, who kept court with the elders and scribes. Peter followed at a distance, and sat among the audience to see what would happen.

The priests accused Jesus of blasphemy and

brought witnesses, who swore that he had announced that he had the power of God, and the priests asked him if he were really the Messiah, the son of God. Jesus answered, "As you have said."

Then the priests and elders said they were horrified, and exclaimed, "He has spoken blasphemy, for which the punishment is death," and they smote and spat in his face.

Peter was seen in the hall by a girl, who cried out that he was one of Christ's disciples, but he denied it flatly. Two other people said they recognized him, but each time he said they were mistaken, fearing for his life. So the word of Christ came true, when earlier in the evening, he had declared that Peter would deny him three times that same evening, in spite of the fact that Peter revered and loved him.

Peter went out and wept bitterly at his cowardice, but could not muster courage to stand by his leader. Jesus was condemned to death, but the consent of the Roman governor was necessary to carry out the sentence.

Jesus was bound and carried to Pontius Pilate, and the Hebrews accused him of plotting against the State and the gods. In the meantime, Judas was taken with a fit of remorse, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the priests in the Temple, saying, "Take back your money, I have shed innocent blood."

But they answered, "What is it to us? That is your affair." He threw down the silver on the

floor of the Temple, and going out in the woods, hanged himself. It was not considered right for them to take back the money they had given him to sell Jesus, so it was used to purchase a plot of ground, which was called the Potter's field, to bury him in, and to this day, this name is used to designate the cemetery for the poor, friendless and unknown.

Jesus was taken before Pontius, who asked him, "Do you claim to be the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "I am."

Pontius put him through an examination, and does not seem to have found any cause for the accusations and condemnation, that is, as far as a crime against the State of Rome was concerned. He even said to the elders that he could see no crime in the man's actions. This stung them to fury, and they reiterated their accusations, stating that he was a traitor and a malcontent, stirring up the people against the State and Caesar.

Pontius however, did not want to condemn Jesus, and sent him to Herod for examination, possibly in the hope that if Christ were to be condemned to death, it should be by someone other than he; Jesus being a native of Galilee, and Herod being Governor of Galilee, it brought Jesus under Herod's jurisdiction.

Jesus was carried to Herod therefore, but was mute before him and refused to answer questions, and Herod sent him back to Pontius, to pass sentence on him. Pontius realized that the priests and elders had set their hearts on the death of the

prisoner, but he could not see the justice of their case.

He was however, a little timorous of his own situation. He was afraid that he might be impeached at Rome for siding with a revolutionist or enemy of Rome by the Hebrews if he released Jesus Christ, and this would be a very dangerous position in those days, even if untrue, to have a breath of suspicion against one.

Rome was very jealous of the upholding of her authority, and no representatives would be tolerated with the least taint of weakness or suspicion. Rome ruled by its might, and there was no sentiment about it.

He tried one pretext to save Jesus. It was the custom at this Easter period for the Governor to release one prisoner at the request of the public, and they now came to ask this favor. There was a well-known rebel, of the name of Barabas, in gaol at the time.

The Governor asked the crowd if they wanted him to free Jesus, but incited by the elders, they said no, and demanded that Barrabas be released, and he was compelled to hold Jesus.

Then he said to the public, "How shall we put this man to death?" and they replied, "He must be crucified." So he was delivered into the hands of the soldiers to be so punished, but Pontius said to the people, "I wash my hands of the whole matter," (literally washing his hands) "his blood be upon your heads."

They then scourged Jesus and stripped him

and put a red robe on him, which was the custom with all those sentenced to be crucified in those days. One of his tormentors put a crown of thorns and twigs on his head, hailing him as "King of the Jews."

It is said that Pilate even tried to save him after the scourging, but it was useless, the people were so worked up and determined to have him put out of the way. They re-dressed him in his own clothes and carried him to a place called Calvary, as we pronounce it today. Its Hebrew name was Golgotha; in Latin, Calvaria.

Here he was practically stripped, nailed to an immense cross and crucified between two thieves, who had been condemned for their misdemeanors. A board with an inscription, "This is Jesus, king of the Jews," was raised over his head.

His enemies stood by, mocking him, saying, "If you be Christ, why not save yourself?" Even the two thieves, crucified at his sides, taunted him to save himself and them too if he were really the son of God. But he heeded them not.

He died after probably about ten hours on the cross.

Chapter XXX

PETER—PAUL—CONCLUSION

As is natural after such a tragedy, many superstitious stories have been circulated as having occurred at the time, for none of which there is the slightest foundation. This is not at all strange, considering the superstition and mystery that has ever surrounded the whole history of Jesus.

It is said that he rose from his grave three days after his death; that an angel of God rolled back the heavy stone of his sepulchre (his body was delivered to another of his disciples, Joseph of Arenathea, who buried it in a new tomb in the rocks, and put a huge stone over the entrance) and sat there and told two women, who came to pray and watch, that Jesus had risen from the tomb and laid gone to Galilee.

It was also asserted that Jesus met his disciples after his death and accosted them; that he assembled and met them all at a mountain in Galilee, and instructed them to travel all over the earth to all nations and instruct them in the worship of the true God, Christ and the Holy Ghost, and to baptize them in the faith of Jesus, to be, as now called, "Christians," "For I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

After the death of Jesus, for some time we hear no more of the disciples or apostles. They kept under cover, fearing detection and the fate

of Christ, and worked in the dark. Some of those of his followers, who had cooled in their ardor, gradually came back in secret, and the new Christian religion brought in converts in secret.

The priests and elders had been badly shaken by Jesus' inroads on their authority to countenance any further encroachments, and it would have gone ill with the disciples if they had been discovered and denounced.

The disciples preached in secret and promised the return of Jesus Christ to redeem the world in God's good time. Peter, however, preached a sermon extolling Jesus and his works, and was arrested by the order of the priests along with the apostle John. Peter, now grown bolder, defied the priests, who were afraid to punish him, as in the first place there was no criminal count on which to convict him, and secondly, such a crowd followed and believed in him, that the council dared do naught, but let him go with a warning, which he ignored.

Money came in now for the apostles from several sources, to aid them in their propaganda, especially as Peter and the rest of them performed many miracles by power of prayer to Jesus, so the Bible says, but it is not necessary to believe in this part. They were later imprisoned by the Sadducees who now seemed to be vested with all authority, but escaped from gaol by night.

Instead of running away, however, they went to the Temple and preached, and were recap-

tured and brought before the Sanhedrim, who asked them how they dared to preach their false doctrines.

Peter answered, "We obey God, not man," which angered the priests, and they consulted each other as to slaying the disciples, but one of the counsellors, Gameliel, suggested letting them go and not make martyrs of them, which was done, after beating them severely.

Now several other disciple joined the apostles, one of whom, Stephen, was very strong in faith. He attacked the elders of the synagogue so fiercely, that he was arrested, accused of blasphemy, condemned and stoned to death.

One man, very active in the persecution of the Christians, was named Saul, afterwards known as Paul, whom we have mentioned before.

This Saul took charge of the ferreting out of the Christians in Jerusalem, breaking into their homes, religious meetings and assemblies, and arresting them right and left, and leading them to prison. He went to the High Priest and received permission to go to Damascus and arrest any of the new sect of Christians wherever he found them.

On the way he imagined he heard the voice of Jesus call to him and appeal to his reason, and ask why he persecuted his church, which turned his heart, and he desisted, becoming convinced that Christ was a truth and a fact, and became a Christian at heart himself.

When he came to Damascus, a certain dis-

ciple, Ananias, who explained the word of Jesus to him, further convinced him that Jesus had specially selected him as his apostle, and converted and baptized him. And then he even preached Christianity in the synagogue, or church.

The orthodox Jews were at first astounded and could not believe their ears and eyes at his actions, then they were exasperated and decided to kill him when he left the town at the gate, but he escaped over the walls. He came back to Jerusalem, and wished to join the other disciples, but they were afraid of him, looking upon him as an enemy as well they might, and feared a snare on his part. But he convinced them of his sincerity and they accepted him and let him preach in the synagogue.

Here the Bible mentions certain curing of sickness, and raising the dead to life, which it is no sin to disbelieve. Peter preached the word of Christ to some Gentiles, that is, people not of the Jewish faith, other than Christians. He was reproached for this, but defended himself satisfactorily.

Paul went to Antioch and taught the people the word of Jesus. It was here that the followers took the name of Christians.

Herod now took a hand in affairs and arrested and killed James the Apostle; he also had Peter arrested, as he saw it pleased the Jews. Peter managed to escape just before the day that Herod intended to sentence him. Herod had the gaolers killed, which was the regular thing in

those days, and in more recent times, too. Herod died soon after from a stroke.

There were now several strong divisions both among the Jews and Gentiles, as many of each had followed the disciples, and there were Jews fighting Jews, Gentiles fighting Gentiles, and both Jews and Gentiles fighting each other. At last the disciples had to run away to a place called Lycaonia. Here Paul was stoned by the Jews who followed him and was left for dead, but was only injured badly, and recovered. He was now the real great leader of the Christians and expounder of the Gospels.

He spread Christianity all over the country, and into Syria and Cilicia, even going as far as Cyprus.

He and another apostle named Silas, were attacked in Macedonia, arrested and imprisoned, but they converted their gaolers and persecutors, and were released. Then they went to Thessalonica and converted many Hebrews and Greeks, but were attacked and had to escape with their lives in their hands, and went to Berea, where they made more converts.

When things got too hot for them here, they went to Athens, where they made some conversions, but do not seem to have been so successful as elsewhere. The Athenians had too large an assortment of easy-going, comfortable sort of gods to change rapidly.

From Athens to Corinth, where Paul spent

eighteen months, and had much success with the word of Christ.

However, he was arrested there by the Jewish elders and taken before the Deputy Gallio, who refused to entertain a complaint against him; instead, the Greeks assaulted and beat Sosthenes, the chief of the synagogue, for bothering him.

Then to Syria and Ephesus and back to Antioch. His pilgrimage was so long, and covered so much ground that it is unnecessary to mention all the places that he visited, but he left no stone unturned to present the Gospel of Christ, and to make Christians of all he could, both Jews and Gentiles. Finally they returned to Jerusalem.

Here Paul was assaulted outside the Temple and nearly killed, but was rescued and arrested by the soldiers, who came to quell the rioting. He made an appeal to the people and the soldiers, but was bound and scourged. He protested at the whipping, as he was a Roman citizen, and this was against his rights, as he was "free born." They loosed him, therefore, and took him before the council, that is, the Council of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

The council questioned him, and sent him to prison; but some of the Jews banded together and determined to kill him, as he was brought to court next day for examination. This coming to the ears of the captain of the Roman guard, he decided to send Paul to the Roman governor, Felix, for judgment.

Here he was accused of being a "nuisance, a mover of sedition among the people, and a profaner of the Temple," and punishment was demanded on him.

Felix believed in Paul's innocence, and even was moved by his testimony in Christ, especially as his own wife, Drusilla, was a Jewess, and he released him temporarily.

After Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus, which happened two years later, the latter was besieged by the Jews to pass judgment on Paul. Paul was brought to the bar at Cesaria, where Festus was, and denied the charges of wrongdoing. Festus however, wished to please the Jews, and asked if he were willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged there.

Paul replied, "No, I am a Roman, and appeal to Caesar. I have done no wrong against the State."

Festus consulted with a king (?) Agrippa, and finally decided that Paul was innocent, but that they could not release him because he had appealed to Caesar, and therefore he must be sent to Rome for final judgment. Finally he was sent away under a guard by ship to Rome, and after several adventures, which are of no moment or importance, he arrived there. Here he spent a couple of years in his own house, sending for the Jewish elders and preaching the Gospel to them, and receiving all who cared to come to him, and making many converts.

Here the Bible ends very abruptly. Nothing

more is said of Paul's appeal to Rome, or what became of Peter and the other disciples. We learn a little from other sources.

Paul evidently was released in Rome from the charges, and he spent the rest of his life travelling about, preaching the Gospels. Peter also travelled, finally landing in Rome also.

Years later in the time of Nero, great events affected the Christians in Rome. The city was partly destroyed by fire, set, it is claimed, by Nero, and the Christians were accused of setting the fire, and thousands of them were tortured and killed.

Among the last of them so punished was Peter, who was scourged and crucified. Paul also was accused and executed, but not scourged, being a citizen.

Nero shortly after this was attacked and had to run away. He committed suicide.

By this time the seed of Christianity was spread far and wide, although it took many hundreds of years to spread, chiefly or almost entirely, westward. Its force could not be checked, and it became the one principle for which the nations claimed they fought to uphold.

The story of Christianity however, has no place in our history, and with the deaths of Peter and Paul, we bring this record to a close.

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